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Perceptions of family involvement and cultural responsiveness in early childhood education

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PERCEPTIONS OF FAMILY INVOLVEMENT AND CULTURAL
RESPONSIVENESS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

by

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A Major Research Paper
presented to Ryerson University
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Masters of Arts
in the Program of
Early Childhood Studies

Toronto, Ontario Canada, 2009

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Author's Declaration

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Masters of Arts

Early Childhood Studies

Ryerson University

Abstract

This study explores 30 early childhood professionals' and 31 family members' perceptions of practices associated with eliciting and fostering culturally responsive family involvement in the High/Scope approach to Early Childhood Education, an identified, research-based model of early childhood curricula. A non-experimental cross-sectional survey design was used to gather data in three different High/Scope programs related to the role of culture, the curriculum model, family involvement practices and the perceived differences of these practices by the early childhood professionals and the family members. The results suggest that both participant groups are aware of family involvement practices that strive to acknowledge the diverse contextual lives of children lending support to initiating culturally responsive practices in early childhood settings.

Key words: cultural responsiveness; family involvement, High/Scope approach, early childhood curricula

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"There are two ways of spreading light: to be the candle or the mirror that reflects it."
Edith Wharton

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"You are not the child of the people you call mother and father, but their fellow-adventurer on a bright journey to understand the things that are."

Richard Bach

Table of Contents

Author's Declaration	ii
Abstract.....	iii
Acknowledgements.....	iv
Table of Contents.....	vi
List of Tables	xi
List of Figures.....	xii
List of Appendices.....	xiii
1. Introduction.....	1
2. Literature Review	3
2.1 Developmentally Appropriate Practice.....	3
2.2 Ontario Legislation and Early Learning Framework.	5
2.3 Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory	6
2.4 Super and Harkness's Developmental Niche.....	9
2.5 What is Family Involvement?	11
2.6 What is Cultural Responsiveness?	16
2.7 Culturally Responsive Family Involvement	17
2.8 A Precedent for Early Childhood Education - Educating the Early Childhood Educator	19
2.9 The High/Scope Model of Early Childhood Curricula	23
2.9.1 High/Scope family involvement and cultural responsiveness	25

2.10 Extending the Literature.....	28
3. Statement of the Problem.....	29
3.1 Diversity and Developmentally Appropriate Early Childhood Education.....	29
3.2 Purpose of the Research	30
3.3 Research Questions	30
4. Method	31
4.1 Participants	31
4.1.1 Sample Size.....	31
4.1.2 Participant demographics.....	32
4.2 Measures.....	34
4.2.1 The instrument of study	34
4.2.2 Family involvement practices encouraged within the program	37
4.2.3 Terminology and language of communication and written documents evident within the setting.....	38
4.2.4 Visual representation of cultural diversity evident within the setting, ...	39
4.2.5 Availability of culturally responsive support and resources within the setting,.....	39
4.2.6 Barriers to family involvement	40
4.3 Procedures	41
4.3.1 Design	41
4.3.2 Recruitment.....	41
4.3.4 Data Collection	43

5. Results.....	46
5.1 Family Involvement Practices Encouraged within the Setting	46
5.1.1 Early childhood professionals.....	47
5.1.2 Family members	48
5.1.3 Comparisons between early childhood professionals and family members	50
5.2 Terminology and Language of Communication and Written Documents Evident within the Setting	52
5.2.1 Early childhood professionals.....	52
5.2.2 Family members	54
5.2.3 Comparisons between early childhood professionals and family members	55
5.3 Visual Representation of Cultural Diversity Evident within the Setting.....	56
5.3.2 Early childhood professionals.....	57
5.3.3 Family members	57
5.3.4 Comparisons of the early childhood professionals and the family members	58
5.4 Availability of Culturally Responsive Supports and Resources within the Setting	59
5.4.1 Early childhood professionals.....	59
5.4.2 Family members	60

5.4.3 Comparisons between early childhood professionals and family members	61
5.5 Barriers to Family Involvement	61
5.5.1 Early childhood professionals.....	61
5.5.2 Family members.....	62
5.4.3 Comparisons of early childhood professionals and family members	63
5.6. Research Questions	65
6. Discussion	67
6.1 Family Involvement Practices Encouraged within the Program	68
6.2 Terminology and Language of Communication and Written Documents Evident within the Setting	71
6.3 Visual Representation of Cultural Diversity Evident within the Setting	73
6.4 Availability of Culturally Responsive Support and Resources within the Setting	75
6.5 Barriers to Family Involvement	76
6.6. Limitations of the Study	80
6.7 Implications for Practice and Further Research	82
6.8 Conclusion.....	84
Appendix A.....	86
Family Involvement Survey.....	86
Appendix B	96
Cover Letter for Family Member.....	96

Consent Letter for Family Member 97

Cover letter for EC Professionals 99

Consent Letter for EC Professionals 100

References..... 102

List of Tables

Table 1	Demographic Characteristics of Participants.....	34
Table 2	Question Scales on the Instrument of Study.....	36
Table 3	Items related to Family Involvement Survey Significant Themes.....	37
Table 4	Perception of Language Use in Documents and Translation Support.....	56
Table 5	Comparison of Culturally and Ethnically Diverse Visual Representation in the Early Childhood Setting.....	58
Table 6	Comparison of Participant Perception of Barriers to Family Involvement in the Early Childhood Setting.....	64

List of Figures

Figure 1 Percentage of early childhood professionals above 50% reporting for family involvement practices in the early childhood settings 48

Figure 2 Percentage of family members above 50% reporting family involvement practices in the early childhood settings.....50

List of Appendices

Appendix A 86

    Family Involvement Survey..... 86

Appendix B 96

    Cover Letter for Family Member..... 96

    Consent Letter for Family Member 97

    Cover Letter for EC Professionals 99

    Consent Letter for EC Professionals..... 100

1. Introduction

"A society that wants to have a highly competent population for the future to cope with the demands of the emerging knowledge-based world and global economy will have to ensure that all its children have the best stimulation and nourishment during the critical early years of development, regardless of family circumstances. The changing nature of families requires increased support for parents outside the traditional inter-generational support systems. Investments in the early period of life are as important as investments in education, post secondary education, and health care."

(McCain & Mustard, 1999, p.17)

In Canada, early learning and care refers to non-familial child care arrangements including regulated child care programs, and other child focused community services aimed at families with young children such as family resource programs and parenting centres. Canada does not have a national policy or standardized curriculum to early learning and care and therefore there is an enormous range in the types of services, the quality of programs, and accessibility for families. In the absence of a national position on early learning and care regulated child care programs fall under provincial jurisdiction. Provincial and territorial ministries determine and define the types of early learning and care programs available within the individual provinces, as well as how these programs are regulated, and how they function. Therefore, there are inequities in program requirements, quality, and accessibility for early learning and care services.

Early learning and care in Canada is receptive to the changing demographics of Canadian society and the increasingly diverse contextual lifestyles of the families accessing these programs. The ethnic and cultural diversity within Canada is necessitating a shift in early learning and care programs that fosters a more responsive and respectful curriculum. As more families access early learning and care programs, quality programming must recognize the unique needs of families which includes,

valuing and respecting their various cultural and ethnic identities. It is through this lens that the issue of culturally responsive family involvement practices are explored. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore the perceptions of family members who access an early learning and care program, and the perceptions of the early childhood professionals who work in these programs, as they describe the family involvement practices aimed at fostering the unique identities and honouring the cultural context of the children in their care.

2. Literature Review

"When parents are involved in their children's education at home, they do better in school. And when parents are involved in school, children go farther in school and the schools they go to are better."
(Henderson & Berla, 1994, p.15)

There is no denying the overwhelming evidence that supports the importance of family involvement in the educational achievement of children; however there is a limited amount of research that directly addresses the importance of the role of cultural responsiveness and family involvement in early childhood programs. It is known that the quality of care and education in early childhood settings is increased with the implementation of a consistent, research-based curriculum model (Marcon, 1999; Goffin, 2000; Goffin & Wilson, 2001; Roopnarine & Johnson, 2005). As a diverse grouping of early childhood professionals and family members come together in early childhood programs their ability to form cohesive, productive partnerships that engage family involvement practices will directly impact the quality of the children's well-being and educational success.

2.1 Developmentally Appropriate Practice

Developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood education is a framework of best practice for working with young children and their families that supports quality programming, and promotes excellence (Gestwicki, 2007; Bredekamp & Copple, 2009). According to the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), developmentally appropriate practice is based on: 1) child development and learning

knowledge of age-related characteristics, 2) knowledge of individual child interests and strengths, and 3) knowledge of the social and cultural context of a child (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). This third component of developmentally appropriate practice is significant as the original position paper published in the 1980's was widely criticized for failing to consider the cultural context of children's lives (Jipson, 1991; Fowell & Lawton, 1992; Wilcox-Herzog, 2002). Criticisms included the use of developmental theory as its conceptual base. Critics proposed reconceptualising the guidelines of developmentally appropriate practice, to use cultural and historical contextual theory as its foundation, and questioned whether the practices were applicable to the lives of culturally diverse children (Jipson, 1991; Lubeck, 1994, 1996). Charlesworth (1998) cautioned using the guidelines of developmentally appropriate practice outlined by NAEYC with care. Early childhood professionals should become knowledgeable in the cultures of the families' they serve, and if any part of the early childhood program conflicts with these cultures, the family members and early childhood professionals should work in constructive partnership to resolve the conflict. The guidelines of developmentally appropriate practice "are not intended as doctrine, but rather as a way to plan for providing supportive environments for young children" (Charlesworth, 1998, p. 7). Developmentally appropriate practice identifies a key area of best practice for early childhood educators as establishing and sustaining reciprocal and mutually beneficial relationships with family members; recognizing that the family is the principal source of knowledge regarding a child's social and cultural context (Bredekamp & Copple, 2009, p. 22).

2.2 Ontario Legislation and Early Learning Framework.

In Ontario, the legislations that govern all early childhood programs, including the professionals working in early childhood are the Early Childhood Educators Act, 221/08 and the Day Nurseries Act: O Regulation 262. Early childhood educators in Ontario are defined by the legislation as someone possessing a diploma from a program in early childhood education offered by an Ontario College of Applied Arts and Technology. Persons who qualify as an early childhood educator equivalent and those who engage in the practice of early childhood education but do not possess an Ontario early childhood education diploma are defined by the Association of Early Childhood Educators, Ontario (AECE,O) and the Ontario Early Childhood Educators Act, Ontario Regulation 221/08 (Government of Ontario, 2008). Section 52 (2) of the Day Nurseries Act: O Regulation 262 identifies that each day nursery must have a written statement regarding parent involvement. The type of parental involvement is not specified (Government of Ontario, 1990).

The Best Start Expert Panel on Early Learning (Government of Ontario, 2006), commissioned by the Ontario government, published a framework for pedagogy and curriculum for the early childhood sector. *Early Learning for Every Child Today* (2006) is the resulting framework intended to enable Ontario to become “an international leader in achieving the social, intellectual, economic, physical and emotional potential of all its children” (p.4). Two of the six overarching principles of *Early Learning for Every Child Today* (2006) specifically address issues related to family involvement and the diversity

of the population. These two guiding principles include: “Partnerships with families and communities strengthen the ability of early childhood settings to meet the needs of young children” (p. 9) and “Demonstration of respect for diversity, equity and inclusion are prerequisites for optimal development and learning” (p. 11). The remaining four principles underpin the importance of understanding children in the context of their family and community as fundamentally essential for their optimum learning and development. Although *Early Learning for Every Child Today* was commissioned and published in 2006 by the Ontario Government; it is not a provincial requirement for early childhood settings.

With the extensive research on the importance of family involvement for the educational success of children, and the legislation and pedagogical frameworks that support the importance of family participation in the success of children, quality early childhood programs must adopt practices that will elicit culturally responsive family involvement. This study characterizes how early childhood professionals and family members perceive the role of culture as it influences the practices of fostering family involvement in the education and care of children in the High/Scope model of early childhood curricula.

2.3 Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory

Urie Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory model of early childhood development (1979, 1986, 2005) highlights child-rearing as a joint venture between families, early childhood settings, schools, and the communities surrounding the child

(Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2006). Bronfenbrenner argues that children develop within interrelated contextual systems created by their family and society, and the bi-directional influences of the individual and the environmental systems shape the development of the child. The cultural and environmental context of the four concentric structures, with each layer nested within the next, divides the child's world into experienced environments that exert influence on the child's development. This influence is cyclical in nature as the perceptions of the people within the system also influence the environment. The structures of Bronfenbrenner's ecological model describing the sociocultural emphasis on human development are referred to as the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem (1979, 1986, 2005).

The microsystem is the setting with which the child lives and has daily, immediate contact. This layer is closest to the child, and the bi-directional, reciprocal interactions characterized in this layer are the strongest and have the greatest influence on the child. Early childhood programs and families reside within the microsystem of Bronfenbrenner's ecological model, stipulating the importance and implications of the quality of the connections between these settings (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1986).

The mesosystem is characterized by the interactions, connections, and influences between the structures in the microsystem. The relationships between the microsystems, or the contexts, shape the behaviour of the other structures in the microsystem.

“Without family involvement, intervention is likely to be unsuccessful and what few effects are achieved are likely to disappear once the intervention is discontinued”

(Bronfenbrenner, 1974, p. 300). The family involvement practices of early childhood programs would reside within this layer of the ecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1986).

The exosystem characterizes the cultural and environmental context beyond the child's immediate experience, yet still has an influence on his/her immediate world. The interaction and the indirect influence of the settings of the exosystem with the structures of the microsystem have a significant impact on the development of the child and characterize the interactions of the family members with the early childhood programs. The legislation (e.g., Day Nurseries Act, Child and Family Services Act, and Health and Safety Act,), and services in the community of the early childhood sector (e.g., Children's Aid Society, and Best Start Initiatives) would function within this structure of the ecological systems theory model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1986).

The macrosystem is the most complicated system (Gardiner & Kosmitzki, 2008) consisting of the attitudes, values, ideologies, and customs of the culture, or subculture in which the child lives. The child's identity within his/her familial context would be formed in this system and therefore influenced by the family involvement practices utilized by the early childhood settings. As well, the form and function of the differing models of early childhood curricula (e.g., High/Scope, Montessori, and Reggio Emilia Approach), identified best practices (e.g., developmentally appropriate practice), and early childhood curriculum frameworks (e.g., *Early Learning for Every Child Today*) are among the structures of this system of the ecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1986).

The chronosystem is not a nested system of the ecological systems theory model of human development, and in fact was not consistently included by Bronfenbrenner until his later work (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). The chronosystem acknowledges the sociohistorical circumstances and transitions in a person, culture or environment over an extended period of time or life course. The impact of the quality of early childhood programs and the family involvement practices in those programs, on future adult success is an example of this system (Bronfenbrenner, 2005).

2.4 Super and Harkness's Developmental Niche

Bronfenbrenner's ecological system theory model of human development is the basis of the cross-cultural developmental niche developed by Super and Harkness (1986) as a way to conceptualize how culture and environment contribute to human development. Specifically, the microsystem and exosystem structures are elucidated as this theoretical framework refers to the diversity of context that children experience in their lives, proposing that it is vitally important to understand behaviour within context. The developmental niche considers the contextual influences on children's development, distinguishing three interrelated components for every child's developmental niche: "1) the physical and social settings of daily life in which a child lives. 2) the culturally regulated customs of child care and childrearing practices. [and] 3) the psychology of the caretakers" (Gardiner & Kosmitzki, 2008, p. 28-30). Similar to Bronfenbrenner, Super and Harkness (1994) describe the interaction between the structures of the child's world and the child's development as reciprocal; with the child being affected by the

contextual setting, as well as the child's development having an effect on the environment, as the child grows and changes.

The developmental niche component physical and social settings of daily life in which a child lives includes the people present, the environmental settings and the availability of materials and supports in the child's immediate world. This component of the developmental niche includes the reciprocal interactions between the child and family members, friends, and caretakers, as well as his/her interactions within the family structure, physical set up of the living space, nutritional status, and the ecological setting and climate of the child's world (Gardiner & Kosmitzki, 2008).

The culturally regulated customs of child care and child rearing focuses on the sociocultural practices associated with teaching, socializing and protecting the child within the larger community. These practices and customs are so subconsciously engrained in the culture of the child's community the need to rationalize their validity is not considered; they are considered the natural, and reasonable method for functioning (Super & Harkness, 2002).

The third component of the developmental niche refers to the psychology of the caretaker. This element explains the characteristics of the child's caretakers in reference to their values, beliefs, expectations and styles of interaction. These factors not only influence the immediate behaviours of the caretakers but they inform their larger decisions (Super & Harkness, 1994).

The interrelationship of all three components of Super and Harkness's theoretical framework, like Bronfenbrenner's ecological model, underscores the significance and

value of meaningful family involvement in early childhood settings as the components interact with, and influence one another as a coordinated system of human development. A child's optimal development is intricately connected to the cultural and environmental context of their existence. The family members and early childhood professionals affect the contextual systems of a child's life, therefore these theoretical models provide a lens through which this study is driven.

2.5 What is Family Involvement?

The more a family feels included in the education and care of their children, the more empowered they feel; the more empowered a family feels, the more they are likely to be involved in the planning and decision making of the daily processes of early childhood programs (Shipley, 2008). There is a plethora of research that has been conducted over the past 30 years to support family involvement as a crucial contribution to a child's academic achievement (Golan & Peterson, 2002) and early childhood programs are not excluded from this concept. However, the research differs on what constitutes family involvement and what particular family members are included in the perception of family involvement. Family involvement can mean many different things to many different people (Jeynes, 2003).

A number of researchers define family involvement as building relationships with parents; the idea of respectful, reciprocal, receptive, inclusionary partnerships with parents generate the essentials of best practice for family involvement (Moore & Lasky, 2001). Martin (1997) describes family involvement as reliant on building the home-

school relationships through recurrent, mutual, open communication with parents. Without this essential communication parents will not feel as though they are included in their child's education. Turnball, Turbiville and Turnbull (2000) concur that parent-professional partnerships in early childhood education are enabled, and developed through relationships. It is vital for educational professionals to seek parental engagement with the school for the purpose of encouraging continuity between the school and home environments. This continuity is best accomplished through the facilitation of the parent's unique understanding of their child. The aim of the home-school relationship is to support, encourage and promote the parent's positive approach to their child's learning by providing information and referrals to any necessary additional services (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2006, p. 148.). However, focusing on parents as the family's sole proprietor of the home-school relationship could be exclusionary to collectivist cultures who share child-rearing practices amongst their extended family members. The individualistic assumptions made by many Western society educators place families from culturally diverse backgrounds at an unfair disadvantage since they do not share these same values as the educators and therefore they may be unclear about what is expected from them (Kalyanpur, Harry, & Skrtic, 2000). Widening the definition of who is involved opens the door to more inclusive practice. Inclusive, best practice can be demonstrated by encouraging family involvement with all families and all family members (Henderson & Berla, 1994; Eptsein et. al. 2002). Christian (2006) proposes applying a family systems theory to early childhood education that defines family involvement with a focus on

family behaviour rather than individual behaviour. This definition identifies the family as interrelated members of a group, where each member is connected to, and influences the others.

Family involvement in the home-school relationship is any activity that brings families in contact with early childhood educators and school administrators (Epstein, 1987). *Taking a Closer Look: a Guide to Online Resources on Family Involvement* defines family involvement as involving a broad range of constructs. The guide highlights the work of 126 educational and early childhood organizations utilizing family involvement practices and identifies family involvement as “any support to children’s learning and development, home–school relationships, parent leadership development, and collective engagement for school improvement and reform” (Weiss, Faughnan, Caspe, Wolos, Lopez & Kreider, 2005, para. 3). In order for children to be successful they need an assortment of learning supports around them, and families need to feel comfortable with the process of supporting their children (Weiss, Caspe, & Lopez, 2006; Civil & Bernier, 2006). Hoge, Smit and Crist (1997) define family involvement as family expectations, interest, involvement in the school, and family community (as cited in Jeynes, 2003).

A challenge to what constitutes family involvement often involves the educational institution’s perception of how the family should be included. Teachers often construct their own role to be that of the authority and expert on educational issues involving children, thus reducing family members to passive roles (Bernhard, Lefebvre, Chud, & Lange, 1995; Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti, 2005). Crozier and Davies (2007) investigated

157 households with children ranging from primary to higher education grade levels. The investigators found that many of the family involvement expectations are assumptions made by the schools, and therefore hidden from families causing vulnerable situations for students. Many educators are apt to label families as “not involved”, “uninterested” or “hard-to-reach” in the education of their children based on assumptions they have made about race and ethnicity. According to Friere (1970) many educational institutions subscribe to a "banking concept of education" (p. 72) where children and families are relegated to submissive "containers...to be filled by the teacher" (p. 72). The teachers position themselves as the experts of knowledge and the authority on what should be learned and how. Parents and family members are not given roles in partnership with educators; their roles are tightly outlined and they are relegated to classroom helpers (Gonzales et. al. 2005; Epstein, 2007).

The research on the practices of family involvement has identified a need to recognize the element of power that exists in the home-school relationship. As educators position themselves as the experts and the authority on educational issues, a family's unique understanding of their child is demoted and deemed inconsequential. The benefits of family involvement is well documented in the literature; Eldridge (2001) showed that family involvement is not only valuable to children's educational success but that the families, educators, and programs benefit as well with respect to gaining knowledge of child development, specifically the individual children within the program allowing for greater community support (Epstein, 1987; Henderson & Berla, 1994). However, family members who are relegated to submissive roles, or who are viewed as

uninvolved and disinterested because of biased perceptions of the educators, are less likely to be involved (Baum & McMcMurray-Schwarz, 2004). Family members want to participate in their child's education and the practice in early childhood education can be enhanced by outlining a number of options to elicit and foster family-educator partnerships (Ball, 2006), thus equalizing the perceived power as family members have shared control in the involvement practices. The key elements of parent and family inclusion and involvement should be reframing the power structures and parental involvement paradigms, while celebrating, utilizing and drawing upon the multilingual and multicultural backgrounds and learning styles in the classroom (Souto-Manning, & Swick, 2006). The NAEYC (1996) advocates for family involvement practices based on mutual participation, where the family's unique understanding of their child is acknowledged, respected and utilized. Bernhard, et. al, (1995) propose that for successful family involvement practices to be achieved and sustained, the family-professional relationship must be grounded in shared respect and reciprocal interactions.

For the purposes of this study what characteristics constitute a family member was not defined. This distinction was not addressed in an effort to remain inclusive of all who identified with this classification. However the study was guided by Christian's (2006) definition of what constitutes a family member; a family is made up of interrelated members of a self-defined group, where each member is connected to, and influenced by the others. Family involvement, guided by Christian's (2006) definition of a family, and the investigator's own personal experience with early childhood programs, is defined for the purposes of this study as an activity that brings together

early childhood professionals and family members in a mutually reciprocal relationship that is intended to benefit the development of the child.

2.6 What is Cultural Responsiveness?

The term *culture* has multiple meanings and can be defined in many different ways. UNESCO (2002) describes culture as “the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, and that it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs” (p. 1). Gonzalez, Moll and Amanti (2005) are more general in their description, defining culture as the particular traditions, values and formations of identifying societies. Trumbull, Rothstein-Fisch, Greenfield, & Quiroz, (2001) define culture as a single continuum between individualism versus collectivism. Resaldo (2006) argue that there is “not a single, eternal definition of culture, but rather provisional definitions that will be revised as debated unfold through time” (p. vii). With acknowledgement to Resaldo’s (2006) definition of culture, for the purposes of this study culture is defined as “the cluster of learned and shared beliefs, values, practices, behaviours, symbols, and attitudes that are characteristic of a particular group of people and that are communicated from one generation to another” (Gardiner & Kosmitzki, 2008).

Cultural responsiveness is defined in this study as recognizing the context of cultural differences; it is recognizing strengths and respecting competences that are culturally relevant. Cultural responsiveness acknowledges that learning takes place in a

sociocultural context and recognizes that all individuals have cultural experiences that shape their perspectives and interrelate with their development and learning (Bowman & Stott, 1994, Super & Harkness, 2002; Tabors, 2008; Gonzalez-Mena, 2008). This definition of cultural responsiveness aligns itself with both Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory model (1979, 1986) and Super and Harkness's Developmental Niche (2002).

2.7 Culturally Responsive Family Involvement

Family involvement in the education of their children is directly correlated to child development and educational achievement; however, this process cannot assume that all family involvement can be assimilated without regard for a family's cultural, ethnic and class differences (Fullan, 2001). A number of researchers have proposed practices that advocate for the guideline put forth by the third element of developmentally appropriate practice, as defined by NAEYC, which requires teachers to be culturally responsive. The Government of Ontario's (2007) Best Start initiative proposes that high quality early childhood programs should respect "each family's culture, values, language and composition" (p. 28). Hyun (1998) states that educators need to become "multiple perspective-takers" (p.7) and acknowledge that a child's sociocultural family context may be different from their own, and respond appropriately. Furthermore, educators should endeavour to include the values of families into the early childhood programs as a practice to bridge the home and school relationship (Mallory & New, 1994). It is important to create program-family continuity by drawing upon the

expertise of the family member's unique funds of knowledge with the intent of optimizing cultural sensitivity to enhance the experiential learning opportunities for the children (Lasky, 2000). Family resources need to be recognized, respected and utilized (Bernhard, 2002). The Best Start Expert Panel on Early Learning (Government of Ontario, 2006) identified that early childhood settings should instigate strategies that value diversity by making use of a families' traditions, culture and contextual background.

In a child-centred approach, one where the adult facilitates the child's self-discovery of new knowledge and skills, adults are supposed to be responsible for creating environments that reduce or remove unnecessary stress in the lives of children. Mallory and New (1994) suggest that the child-centred approach may be more easily achieved as the partnership between home and school is nurtured and sustained. However, Nicolau & Ramos, (1990) found that this relationship is not easy to foster as barriers related to linguistically and culturally diverse families arise as the family members attempt to become involved in their children's education, especially families that are new to the country (as cited in Golan & Peterson, 2002). Different cultural perspectives on family involvement, language barriers, miscommunication, and differences in opinions about how children learn create barriers between home and school for many families (Bernhard et. al. 1995; Sohn & Wang, 2006; , 2006,). As early childhood professionals and family members make assumptions about families, children and education based on their own cultural and family contexts, barriers arise to culturally responsive family involvement practices (Kalyanpur, Harry, & Skrtic, 2000)

2.8 A Precedent for Early Childhood Education - Educating the Early Childhood Educator

Although much of the literature indicates family involvement is vitally important to the educational success of children, attention to a families' culture is crucial in providing an inclusive education for children from families with diverse backgrounds. There is no denying the evidence that supports the importance of family involvement; however there is limited evidence that addresses how culturally responsive family involvement practices are used in quality early childhood education programs. A review of the school-based education literature addressing culturally and linguistically responsive family involvement practices may provide a guideline that can inform the practice in early childhood education.

Musti-Rao and Catledge (2004) and Souto-Manning and Swick (2006) investigated the value of promoting continuous home-school relations for the success of children's learning in the primary grades through to secondary education. The results suggest that commonalities between parents and teachers perceptions influence the level of learning success for the children, as well as producing benefits for teachers and parents. Strategies for teachers are proposed to promote the collaborative involvement of the families. The strategies address the need to personalize efforts of involvement for each family that will be relevant and responsive to their particular culture, social and economic needs. The implications of personalizing the involvement efforts are reminiscent of the child-centred approach at the heart of developmentally appropriate,

research-based models of early childhood curricula. These guidelines could be used as a benchmark for evaluating the culturally responsive practices of early childhood professionals

The funds of knowledge a family can bring to a program is also a significant resource for early childhood professionals. Funds of knowledge is defined as “historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being” (Gonzalez et. al., 2005, p. 11). Early childhood professionals need to value this asset of a family as it is imperative for strengthening culturally and linguistically responsive family involvement. Culturally responsive involvement from family members can be elicited to encourage multilingual and multicultural approaches to learning through strategies such as self-authored dual-language and English only book activities, multi-language storytelling sessions and multiple sign system experiences (Cummins, Chow, & Schechter, 2006; Whitmore, 2007). Socially responsive transitions between early education programs and elementary schooling can be informed by utilizing funds of knowledge from family involvement. Furthermore, early childhood professionals could draw upon family involvement practices as a resource to support newcomers, multi-lingual and multicultural families who are transitioning into early childhood programs (Osborn, McNess & Pollard, 2006). Family participation can be redefined as family members are viewed as a powerful educational resource to other families and early childhood professionals (Civil & Bernier, 2006). The discourse of the meaning of culturally responsive family involvement in a social context will be informed as early childhood

professionals recognize their own personal biases towards “uninterested” or “hard-to-reach” families (Crozier & Davies, 2007).

Andrews and Yee (2006) acknowledge the value of utilizing funds of knowledge to inform learning, however, they caution against overemphasizing and assuming commonalities for practices related to children, families and communities of similar ethnicity and culture. Hughes and Greenhough (2006) found that the exchange of knowledge between home and school is a complex process where power and control issues underlie, and possibly undermine the processes essential for genuine knowledge exchange and it needs to be personalized to the participants involved. Personalized learning experiences need to be emphasized without creating pigeonholes.

The framework of developmentally appropriate practice (2009) proposes that early childhood professionals should plan curriculum and pedagogy around the diverse needs of the families in their care. The early childhood professional, with the assistance of the family, should value the first language of the families who use the program, employing interpreters if necessary. The early childhood professional should engage in self-reflection about preconceived biases that reduce involvement, engagement and equitable outcomes for all children (NAEYC, 1996; Government of Ontario, 2006; Bredenkamp & Copple, 2009).

Joshi, Eberly & Knorzal (2005) investigated elementary school teachers and administrators and preschool teachers enrolled in graduate college classes. The goal of the study was to promote the educators understanding of family values, beliefs and practices to enhance the school learning environment, while simultaneously encouraging

similar learning environments in the homes of the families founded in the school values, beliefs and practices. The missing link was defined as how educators understand a family's culture, and how this influences their ability to reach families. The authors concluded that the graduate students benefited from courses embedded with cultural diversity and family involvement but caution that while the professionals could speak to the importance of culture on student's learning, they were ill-equipped to translate this knowledge into practice. Issues related to religion were even less incorporated into practice. DeCastro-Ambrosetti, & Cho (2005) also studied pre-service and in-service secondary education teachers enrolled in education classes with concepts of cultural diversity and family involvement embedded within the curriculum. The courses had a positive influence on the attitudes of the educators toward issues of diverse student populations, yet there were still a high percentage of participants who continued to blame disinterested parents and home environments as the reason for the low academic achievement of culturally and linguistically diverse students. These studies suggest that having limited post-secondary educational courses with embedded concepts of family involvement and cultural diversity is insufficient in assuring culturally responsive family involvement practices will be adopted by early childhood professionals. It is also notable that there is little preparation in cultural diversity and family involvement in training and education programs for early childhood professionals compared to the rest of the preparatory curriculum mandated in the approved program standards for early childhood education diploma programs in Ontario (Government of Ontario, 2000). How then, do early childhood professionals learn to be responsive to the diversity of families

they work with? Maintaining currency with research findings and implementing a high quality research-based curriculum model of early education will support early childhood professionals in furthering the entry level skills they receive upon their initial graduation (Bernhard, Lefebvre, Chud, & Lange, 1995; Baum & McMurray-Schwarz, 2004).

2.9 The High/Scope Model of Early Childhood Curricula

The quality of care and education in early childhood settings is increased with the implementation of a consistent, research-based curriculum model (Marcon, 1999; Goffin, 2000; Goffin & Wilson, 2001; Roopnarine & Johnson, 2005). The High/Scope curriculum model is a “complete system of early childhood education, based on child development theory, research, and proven instructional developmentally appropriate practices” (Epstein, 2007, p. 8) with children’s active participatory learning as its central principle (Hohmann, Weikart, & Epstein, 2008). The High/Scope approach was originally founded on the child development theories of Jean Piaget with children viewed as active learners constructing knowledge of their world in partnership with adults (MacNaughton, 2003; Roopnarine & Johnson, 2005; Martin & Corson, 2007; Epstein, 2007; Hohmann, Weikart, & Epstein, 2008). This model was one of the first to establish a testable design permitting researchers to trace the program’s effects throughout the life span of the participants. In the 1960s 123 preschool children considered to be vulnerable to school failure were randomly divided with one subset of the group participating in the Perry Preschool program while the other subset were not enrolled in any preschool program. The major findings of the High/Scope Perry

Preschool Project through Age 40 (2005) showed the long-term results of the study of the 40-year-old adults, who were preschool children when they participated in the study. Compared to the adults who were not involved in any preschool program the children who were involved in the Perry Preschool program have “higher lifetime earnings, greater employment stability, higher educational attainment, greater family stability, and dramatically reduced involvement with crime” (Schweinhart, Montie, Xiang, Barnett, Belfield, & Nores, 2004, p. 13). Today the High/Scope approach to teaching and learning involves the active participation of children and adults with materials, ideas and events as its basic principle. The High/Scope approach is internationally known as a leader in preschool education and teacher training. A High/Scope program incorporates principles of human development with research-validated practices to optimize the holistic potential of each participant (Hohmann, Weikart & Epstein, 2008). A program that meets the High/Scope accreditation standards is qualified to identify itself as a High/Scope Accredited Program, a symbol to families and the community of professional excellence and a promise of a high-quality experiences for all the children and families served. Program accreditation standards require: 1) all lead teachers must be High/Scope Certified Teachers, 2) programs must attain an average score of 4.0 on the Program Assessment — Section V(Family Support), Section VI (Staff Qualifications and Staff Development) and Section VII (Program Management) of the Preschool Program Quality Assessment (PQA) administered by a High/Scope Certified Trainer, and 3) all programs must hold a current government license, (High/Scope Foundation, n.d).

2.9.1 High/Scope family involvement and cultural responsiveness

When describing family involvement in High/Scope programs Hohmann, Weikart and Epstein (2008) identify the “family as a frame of understanding children...from the day they are born, children live within a family that shapes their beliefs, attitudes, and actions. By striving to understand and respect each child’s family, we encourage children to view themselves as valued, contributing members of society” (p.69). There is a strong emphasis on bridging the children’s environments and creating early childhood environments that resemble the children’s homes. The High/Scope curriculum is guided by the belief that children develop optimally in supportive environments that emphasize the five ingredients of active participatory learning; materials, choice, manipulation, child language and thought, and adult scaffolding. The High/Scope curriculum identifies materials as an abundance and variety of interesting and age appropriate resources that are appealing, open ended and readily accessible to children in order to stimulate thought. Choice is identified as children having opportunities to select materials and play partners, set their own goals, change and build on their play ideas, and plan activities according to their interests and needs. Manipulation is identified as children being empowered to move, handle, examine, explore, transform and work with materials and ideas directly. Child language and thought is identified as children communicating their understanding, both verbally and nonverbally about what they are doing and what they have done. Adult scaffolding identifies the role of adults as both supporting children’s current level of thinking and challenging them. Adults accomplish this scaffolding by joining in the child’s world and engaging in verbal and

nonverbal interactions that encourage children's efforts to solve problems that arise naturally in their play (Hohmann, Weikart, Epstein, 2008).

The process of active learning is also the foundation for supporting family involvement. Family members are encouraged to become involved in the programs in tangible ways; volunteering in the classroom or field trips, serving on committees, donating items from home to supplement the program, sharing a talent, contributing to the program newsletter, and attending workshops, orientations, formal conferences, and informal daily contact (Kruse & Neill, 2006; Epstein, 2007, Hohmann, Weikart & Epstein, 2008). This approach to early childhood curricula emphasizes the importance of nurturing and valuing authentic and meaningful family involvement (DiNatale, 2002; Kruse & Neill, 2006; Epstein, 2007, Hohmann, Weikart & Epstein, 2008).

Everyone benefits when the diversity of family styles and traditions are valued in early childhood settings. Developing cross-cultural competence, the ability to be aware of, comprehend, and behave in ways that "acknowledge, respect, and build upon ethnic, [socio]cultural and linguistic diversity" (Lynch & Hanson, 2002, p.49) is a central element of an effective early childhood professional (Gardiner & Kosmitzki, 2008). High/Scope programs recognize "the role of culture in child development and child rearing [as] fundamental, dynamic and all-encompassing...a family's culture serves as an "owner's manual" for raising children" (Kruse & Neill, 2006, p. 17). Strategies for valuing and supporting culturally responsive family involvement with the intention of optimizing children's comfort and security consist of acknowledging family's roots through the inclusion of materials that reflect the diversity of family lives, beliefs and

attitudes, learning from children and families about their styles and traditions and respecting the family's cultures during routine times, creating positive relationships, and anticipating the success of every child and family (Hohmann, Weikart & Epstein, 2008).

Developing a true understanding of each child in the program begins by considering his/her family's values, interaction styles, and desires for their child. The High/Scope curriculum stresses the vital importance for centre-based programs to "make a concerted effort to visit each family [in their home] before, and during the first few weeks of the program" (Hohmann, Weikart & Eptsein, 2008, p. 78). These initial home visits assist in establishing and building relationships that "put families at ease, and [lend a hand in finding] out about each family's strengths, values and [aspirations] for their children" (p.78). These home visits also allow the early childhood professionals the opportunity to bring the child's family context to the early childhood setting.

Diverse materials that are culturally familiar to the children and families should be plentiful and presented in an open-ended manner, allowing children and family members the time to explore and experiment with the materials in their own way. Shared control with children and families allows High/Scope early childhood professionals to stay attuned to the strengths and needs of the children and family members while forming authentic relationships aimed at honouring the diversity of communication patterns and styles of interactions representative of a family's culture (Kruse & Neill, 2006). These elements of the High/Scope curriculum are interrelated with the five ingredients of active learning and throughout the other areas of the curriculum with the purpose of fostering a culturally responsive, inclusive program.

2.10 Extending the Literature

This study is intended to add to the growing body of literature characterizing culturally responsive practice in early childhood education. Understanding the relationship that exists between the role of culture, a model of curricula, early childhood professionals, and family involvement practices will better enable children to grow up with a strong sense of self that promotes values of equity and democracy, thus supporting optimal development and learning.

3. Statement of the Problem

3.1 Diversity and Developmentally Appropriate Early Childhood Education.

The 2001 Census of Canada reported approximately 19% of the population under the age of 14, with 16% of children under the age of 14 identified themselves as visible minorities (Statistics Canada, 2008). A significant proportion of families are accessing child care arrangements outside of the family home (Friendly, Beach, Ferns & Turiano, 2007) as more children have both parents in the labour force (Vanier, 2007). There is a direct correlation between family involvement and children's educational success; in particular the success of immigrant children (Jeynes, 2003; Wiess, Caspe & Lopez, 2006). As the population landscape of the early childhood sector steadily changes to include more linguistically and culturally diverse members, early childhood professionals and family members must work together in a learning community that fosters cultural responsiveness. However, there is also an increasing amount of evidence to support the perceived lack of family involvement between home and school related to barriers associated with cultural differences (Golan & Peterson, 2002; Bernhard & Gonzalez-Mena, 2005; Crozier & Davies, 2007).

With early childhood programs serving a growing diverse population, and the extensive research and legislation that supports the importance of family participation in the success of children, quality early childhood programs that are developmentally appropriate must adopt practices that will elicit culturally responsive family involvement. This study examines the perceptions of family members and early

childhood professionals associated with High/Scope programs, a highly regarded, researched-based model of early childhood curricula, as they describe the incidences of practices associated with eliciting and fostering culturally responsive family involvement in the education and care of children.

3.2 Purpose of the Research

“All children have the right to live and learn in an equitable society” (Government of Ontario, 2006, p.11). The purpose of this study is to explore the perceptions of family members and early childhood professionals as they describe the practices associated with eliciting and fostering culturally responsive family involvement in the High/Scope approach to early childhood education.

3.3 Research Questions

This study will be guided by the following research questions:

1. What practices are used to foster family involvement within the High/Scope curriculum model?
2. How is culturally responsive family involvement encouraged within the High/Scope curriculum model?
3. Do the perceptions of Early Childhood professionals and family members differ when identifying the culturally responsive family involvement practices?

4. Method

Overwhelming research indicates the efficacy of family involvement in the educational success of children. Using the findings of previous research examining the strategies and practices that support the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse families in education programs as a starting point, this study sought to investigate family members' and early childhood professionals' perceptions of family involvement, and the practices related to cultural responsiveness. This study began with the premise that the High/Scope research-based early childhood model of curricula elicits and fosters culturally responsive family involvement; therefore the goal of this study was to explore the perceptions of family members and early childhood professionals as they describe the practices associated with eliciting and fostering culturally responsive family involvement in the High/Scope approach to early childhood education. The selection of the research participants, the research measures and the procedures for collecting data of this study are discussed in this section.

4.1 Participants

4.1.1 Sample Size

Salkind (2007), Gay, Hill and Airasian (2008) and Cresswell (2008) discuss the minimum number of participants suggested for quantitative analysis related to sample size. A minimum sample size of 30 participants per sample group is recommended. For the purposes of this study the sample size was divided into two subsets, or groups for comparison. One group consisted of early childhood professionals, including

supervisor/managers/directors of the early childhood programs (management position title given by the individual settings but persons in these positions fulfill the same role), qualified early childhood educators, or an early childhood educators with equivalence, early childhood assistants, and other staff of the program, including, but not limited to after-school early childhood assistants and cooks. The other group consisted of family members, over the age of 18, who had children between the ages of 2 to 6 years enrolled in a High/Scope preschool program.

The sample for this study was selected from the population of 32 early childhood professionals and 90 family members from three High/Scope accredited programs in two adjacent regions of southern Ontario. A nonprobability convenience sampling method was used in order to obtain the minimum number of 30 participant responses for each sample group.

4.1.2 Participant demographics

Data were collected from 31 early childhood professionals and 30 family members from the High/Scope early childhood centres. Participants identified their role within the early childhood setting as either an early childhood professional, subcategorized into the various roles employed by the centre, or as a family member utilizing the services of the early childhood setting. Of the 31 early childhood professionals who responded to the questionnaire; 22 identified themselves as qualified early childhood educators or early childhood educator equivalent or director's approval (someone approved by the Ministry of Children and Youth Services Director to supervise a group of children in the

child care), one identified as an early childhood assistant, four identified as other staff, and four identified themselves as a child care Supervisor/ Manager/Director. The Ontario Day Nurseries Act: O Regulation 262. Section 58 stipulates that a supervisor must have a diploma in early childhood education from a recognized educational institute or have the academic qualifications that a Ministry Director considers equivalent to a diploma (Government of Ontario, 1990). Therefore it was assumed that child care Supervisors/Managers/Directors were also early childhood educators or Director approved early childhood equivalents. For the purposes of this study, all of the responses for the early childhood professionals were grouped together given that it is conceivable for any member of the professional team to have opportunities to interact with the family members.

Family members were not asked to specify their relationship to the child beyond their association in the early childhood setting. A definition of what constitutes a family member employed in this study was guided by Christian's (2006) definition of what constitutes a family member; a family is made up of interrelated members of a self-defined group, where each member is connected to, and influenced by the others. This distinction was not asked for in the questionnaire in an effort to remain inclusive of all who identified with this classification. The demographics of the participants are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Position/association with early childhood setting	Number of Participants
Early childhood educator	20
Early childhood equivalent/director's approval	2
Early childhood assistant	1
Other Staff of the program	4
Supervisor/manager/director	4
Family member	30

4.2 Measures

4.2.1 The instrument of study

A non-experimental cross-sectional survey design questionnaire (please see questionnaire in Appendix A) was used to elicit data related to the respondent's perceptions of the family involvement practices, and more specifically, the culturally responsive family involvement practices evident in the child care setting. The design of the questionnaire includes items developed by the investigator based on a review of the literature indicating the practices of culturally responsive family involvement that have proven successful for education programs, as well as from the elements identified by the High/Scope approach to multicultural family involvement strategies. Input into the design of the questionnaire also came from the research supervisor. The questionnaire

was developed by the investigator since a previously constructed instrument could not be found that would elicit the data related to the purpose of this study. The aim of the study is to measure the existence of culturally responsive practices elicited and fostered by the High/Scope approach to early childhood education as perceived by the family members and early childhood professionals. The quality of family involvement practices is not the focus of this study. Since the survey questionnaire was developed by the investigator it is subject to bias. In consultation with the research supervisor, an expert in early childhood practices, the questionnaire survey was verified for clarity of questions, and coverage of the intent of study. Modifications were made according to the feedback from the research supervisor with respect to the possible threats relating to content, format and ethical issues.

The questionnaire consisted of a cover letter/consent form (please see letters/consent forms in Appendix B) and a paper copy of the questionnaire. The option of completing the questionnaire online is described on the paper version of the questionnaire. The questionnaire is comprised of 14 questions for a total of 57 items, with one item related to demographics, and the remaining 56 items related to parent/family involvement practices and perceptions of the barriers to parent/family involvement.

A nominal rating scale of “yes”, “no” and “not sure” is employed for the majority of the items on the questionnaire. The paper version of the questionnaire utilizes a numerical format for the scale where “yes” is itemized as “1”, “no” is itemized as “2”, and “not sure” is itemized as “3”. The electronic version of the questionnaire merely

includes only “yes”, “no” and ‘not sure’ as the option. For eleven of the items, a description of performance rating scale is used with further numbering allocated for the options on the paper version, and for twelve of the items there is an opportunity for comments related to the questions.. (See Table 2 for the type of scale used for each item on the questionnaire).

Table 2

Question Scales on the Instrument of Study

Type of Scale:	Item
Nominal Scale	2a, 3c, 4, 5a, 5b, 6c, 6e, 7a-e, 9a-k, 11a-d, 12a, 13a-i
Description of performance rating scale	1, 2b, 3a, 8a, 10a, 12b, 14a-g
Opportunity for comments	3b, 3d, 6b, 6d, 8b, 12c, 12d, 13h, 13i, 14c, 14e, 14f

The items on the questionnaire emerged from the literature and relate to significant underlying (but not identified on the questionnaire) themes including: 1) family involvement practices encouraged within the program, 2) terminology and language of communication and written documents evident within the setting, 3) visual representation of cultural diversity evident within the setting, 4) availability of culturally responsive support and resources within the setting, and 5) barriers to family involvement. Items were coded according to these five themes. Some items may be

coded under more than one theme as the themes are interrelated. (See Table 3 for the themes related to each item on the questionnaire).

Table 3

Items related to Family Involvement Survey Significant Themes

Themes	Item Number
1. Family involvement practices encouraged within the program	2a, 7a-e, 8a, 8b, 9a-k, 11a, 12a-d, 14a-g
2. Terminology and language of communication and written documents evident within the setting	2b, 3a-d, 4, 5a, 5b, 6a-d, 11b, 11c, 13f, 14g
3. Visual representation of cultural diversity evident within the setting	4e, 9a-k, 10, 11d, 13e, 14a-g
4. Availability of culturally responsive support and resources within the setting	3a-c, 4, 5a, 5b, 6a-c, 6e, 8a, 8b, 9b, 9d-g, 9j, 9k, 10, 11a-d, 12a-d, 14c-g
5. Barriers to family involvement	13a-i

4.2.2 Family involvement practices encouraged within the program

Successful family involvement practices discussed by Powell (1998), Gadzikowski (2003), Keyser (2006), and Hohmann, Weikart and Epstein (2008) were used to formulate the items in the questionnaire related to the theme family involvement practices encouraged within the program. These items relate to how often family members and early childhood educators identified that family involvement practices

were occurring in their early childhood settings. Examples of items incorporated into the questionnaire that are connected to broad family involvement strategies include: volunteering in the program, on field trips and for special event celebrations, reading and contributing to the program newsletter, fundraising, attending workshops and information sessions, and participating in joint projects with the early childhood professionals.

4.2.3 Terminology and language of communication and written documents evident within the setting

Inclusive terminology and language discussed by NAEYC (1996), Golan and Peterson (2002), Bernhard and Gonzalez-Mena (2005), Kruse and Neil (2006), Crozier and Davies (2007), and Hohmann, Weikart and Epstein (2008) formed the basis of the items in the questionnaire related to the terminology and language of communication and written documents evident within the setting. These items relate to how often family members and early childhood professionals identified the use of family inclusive terminology and language in the early childhood settings. Examples of items incorporated into the questionnaire that are connected to inclusive terminology and language include: written communication related to policies, documentations, and signs within the setting, the availability of translators or early childhood professionals who speak the primary language of the family, and other resources available within the setting for family use.

4.2.4 Visual representation of cultural diversity evident within the setting,

Suggestions for arranging the aesthetic environment with visually inclusive representations suggested by NAEYC (1996), Powell (1998), Gadzikowski (2003), Golan & Peterson (2002), Bernhard and Gonzalez-Mena (2005), Keyser (2006), Kruse and Neil (2006), Crozier and Davies (2007), and Hohmann, Weikart and Epstein (2008) were used to formulate items in the questionnaire related to the theme visual representation of cultural diversity evident within the setting. These items relate to how often family members and early childhood professionals identify evidence of ethnically and culturally diverse visual representations in the early childhood settings. Representations are identified as signs and pictures within the setting, but also include diversity in the ethnicity and cultures of the early childhood professionals, and other volunteers in the program, as well as physical supplements to the curriculum such as items for play, traditional artefacts used in displays, and menu options.

4.2.5 Availability of culturally responsive support and resources within the setting,

Successful culturally responsive support strategies and resources for early childhood professionals and families members discussed by NAEYC (1996), Golan & Peterson (2002), Bernhard and Gonzalez-Mena (2005), Kruse and Neil (2006), Crozier and Davies (2007), and Hohmann, Weikart and Epstein (2008) were used to formulate the items in the questionnaire related to the theme availability of culturally responsive support and resources within the setting. These items relate to how often family members and early childhood educators identified the availability of culturally

responsive supports and resources in the early childhood settings. Examples of items incorporated into the questionnaire that are connected to culturally responsive supports and resources include: written and verbal communication, the availability of translators, early childhood professionals or other family members who speak the primary language of the family, and the availability of a family resource area within the program.

4.2.6 Barriers to family involvement

Barriers to culturally responsive family involvement practices identified by NAEYC (1996), Golan & Peterson (2002), Bernhard and Gonzalez-Mena (2005), Kruse and Neil (2006), Crozier and Davies (2007), and Hohmann, Weikart and Epstein (2008) were used to formulate the items in the questionnaire related to the theme barriers to family involvement. These items relate to how often family members and early childhood educators identify barriers to any type of family involvement practices in the early childhood settings. Nine items specifically identified as barriers to family involvement approaches are on the instrument. Examples of items incorporated into the questionnaire that are associated with barriers to family involvement include: written and verbal communication, the availability of translators, early childhood professionals or other family members who speak the primary language of the family, and the availability of a family resource area within the program.

4.3 Procedures

4.3.1 Design

A non-experimental cross-sectional survey design was used to capture the perceptions of particular practices of family involvement for three early childhood settings. Cross-sectional survey design research is best suited for one time data collection from a large number of participants to illustrate the opinions, attitudes, characteristics and behaviours of a population (Muijs, 2004; Cresswell, 2008). Additionally, the use of the same questions to both groups provides structure and the potential for straightforward comparability between the participants and the variables. The use of a questionnaire allows the participant to feel a sense of control over the process, in terms of informed consent, participation, beneficence, and reactions (Cohan, Manion & Morrison, 2003).

4.3.2 Recruitment

Selection of the settings was based on the program supervisor's/manager's/director's motivation to participate, and the fact that the program is an accredited High/Scope setting. There are thirteen High/Scope accredited preschool programs residing in these two regions of southern Ontario (M. Fewson, Senior High/Scope Consultant, personal communication, January 2, 2009). Written permission to approach these High/Scope accredited preschool programs was obtained from their respective head offices. All thirteen of the accredited High/Scope centres in these regions of southern Ontario were approached in person by the investigator to participate

in this study. Four early childhood settings' supervisor/manager/director volunteered to participate; however, because of the time constraints related to data collection associated with this study only three settings were included in this research. A document analysis of the early childhood settings was conducted in order to determine compliance with the Ontario legislation governing early childhood settings, each setting was determined to meet the clear licensing requirements for a Day Nursery in Ontario, and each setting has a written statement regarding parent involvement in accordance with the Ontario Day Nurseries Act, O Regulation 262, Section 52 (2) (Government of Ontario, 1990). The written statements pertaining to parent/family involvement are published on the early childhood settings respective websites. The published statements for the three settings refer to "parents", "families" and "caregivers".

The entire population of early childhood professionals employed by the three early childhood settings used in this study, and all of the family members with children present in the early childhood settings on the day of participant recruitment were approached in person by the investigator to partake in the study in order to attain a minimum sample of 30 participants for each group. The participants in the early childhood professionals group was not restricted to qualified early childhood educators or early childhood educator equivalent only because within an early childhood setting all persons who engage in activities that are part of the practice of early childhood education interact with the children and families, and is not restricted to only qualified personnel.

Upon verbal agreement from the early childhood professional or family member the written consent form and the written questionnaire which also indicates the online option for the questionnaire was distributed to the participant. All 122 persons who were approached in person verbally agreed to participate. The individual recruitment was intended to establish an initial rapport with the participants before the questionnaire was completed. One member per family was asked to participate regardless of how many children the family may have enrolled in the program. In the incidence where an early childhood professional could also identify as a family member, or with another classification related to the characterization of participants, the participant was asked to choose the one demographic option on the questionnaire that he/she felt most relevant, and best described his/her position within the setting. Not all participants who verbally agreed to participate returned the questionnaire to the investigator. A one week return period was given in order to meet the timelines of the research

4.3.4 Data Collection

Confidentiality of the participants was protected at all times in the distribution of the questionnaire and the collection of the data. Partaking in this study was strictly voluntary and participants were free to withdraw their consent and stop their participation at any time. At any point during the completion of the questionnaire, the participant could refuse to answer any particular question or stop participation altogether.

Individual envelopes for the return of the completed questionnaires were handed out with the paper questionnaires during recruitment. Larger, stamped envelopes, previously addressed to the investigator, that could accommodate a number of the individual completed questionnaires sealed in their respective envelopes, were distributed to each setting to facilitate the return of the questionnaires. Participants who chose to take part in the study using the paper questionnaires returned the sealed individual envelopes directly to the investigator on the day of distribution, or by depositing the individual sealed envelopes into the larger envelope located in a lockable, secured location in the supervisors/managers/directors' office in the early childhood setting within the one week return period. The investigator retrieved the larger envelopes on the previously agreed upon date, one week from the distribution of the questionnaire. Participants were also given the option of completing the questionnaire online; the uniform resource locator (URL) for the online option was included at the top of the first page of the paper questionnaire. The option for completing the online questionnaire assumed that some participants would be technologically savvy and may have access to a computer either in the early childhood setting, their respective workplaces, or in their homes and may prefer to complete the questionnaire online. A maximum of one week response time was given to the participants for the paper questionnaire from the initial recruitment of participation to the return of the completed questionnaire. The online survey option was no longer available to respondents two weeks after the last paper survey was distributed in person at the participating early childhood settings. Two weeks were given for the online survey to allow the participant

time to locate and use a computer connected to the internet. Participants were offered the opportunity to receive a summary of the results of the research at the end of the questionnaire and if they so chose, the participants were asked to include their contact information.

The paper questionnaires were manually collected by the investigator while data was electronically collected from the online option. There was a 97% response rate from the early childhood professionals and a 33% response rate from the family members. Of the 32 early childhood professionals recruited for participation, 31 consented to participate and 31 responded. Of the 90 family members recruited, there was written consent and response from 30 participants. Of the 32 early childhood professionals 52% completed the questionnaire online and of the 30 family members 70% responded to the questionnaire using the online version.

The data from the paper and online questionnaires were transferred to the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics and the narrative data written in response to the questionnaire were used to examine the early childhood professionals' and the family members' awareness of the existence of both family involvement practices and culturally responsive family involvement practices in the High/Scope early childhood setting.

5. Results

Family members and early childhood professionals associated with High/Scope early childhood education preschool settings were surveyed with the intent of discovering how they perceive the practices associated with eliciting and fostering culturally responsive family involvement. The three focal research questions guiding this study included: 1. What practices are used to foster family involvement within the High/Scope curriculum model?; 2. How is culturally responsive family involvement encouraged within the High/Scope curriculum model?; 3. Do the perceptions of early childhood professionals and family members differ when identifying the culturally responsive family involvement practices? These three research questions are related to the underlying themes of the questionnaire. The themes are: 1) family involvement practices encouraged within the setting, 2) terminology and language of communication and written documents evident within the setting, 3) visual representation of cultural diversity evident within the setting, 4) availability of culturally responsive support and resources within the setting, and 5) barriers to family involvement. These themes were to organize the results of the data collection. The data were gathered using a non-experimental cross-sectional group comparison questionnaire.

5.1 Family Involvement Practices Encouraged within the Setting

A document analysis of the early childhood settings revealed that a written policy on parent/family involvement does not exist in any of the three early childhood settings recruited for this study; however, all of the settings do have written statements regarding

parent involvement in accordance with the Ontario Day Nurseries Act, O Regulation 262, Section 52 (2) (Government of Ontario, 1990). The published statements for the three settings refer to “parents”, “families” and “caregivers” in all occurrences.

5.1.1 Early childhood professionals

Interestingly, although a parent/family involvement policy does not exist for any of the settings involved in the study, 63% of the early childhood professionals acknowledged the existence of a policy, 17% were unsure of whether or not a policy exists, and 20% identified that there was no policy.

Responses from the questionnaire related to specific family involvement practices (refer to Table 3 for the items related to the theme family involvement practices) revealed that the early childhood professionals recognized the existence of family participation in their setting. While a majority of the early childhood professionals acknowledged that the family members were being encouraged to identify their talents (51%) and availability to volunteer in the setting (58%), 29% were unsure of whether or not the identification of talents was sought for family involvement practices. Twenty-eight percent of the early childhood professionals were unsure of whether or not the identification of availability to volunteer in the setting was asked of the family members. A high percentage (81%) of the early childhood professionals reported that family members were being encouraged to identify their interests as an approach to facilitate family involvement. Family involvement practices that support the inclusion of the

talents, interests and availability of the family members, as reported by more than 50% of the early childhood professionals are presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Percentage of early childhood professionals above 50% reporting for family involvement practices in the early childhood settings

The least reported family involvement practices by the early childhood professionals, practices acknowledged by 50% or less of the early childhood professionals included, assisting in the classroom (50%), volunteering outside of the classroom (42%) and facilitating workshops for other members of the setting (32%).

5.1.2 Family members

Although no policy exists in any of the three early childhood settings 41% of the family members reported the existence of a family involvement policy, 14% indicated

that a policy does not exist and another 45% were unsure of whether or not a family involvement policy exists. Fifty-one percent of the family members recognized the existence of family involvement practices in their respective early childhood settings through the encouragement of their interests, while 22% identified that interests were not solicited and 26% were unsure. Availability to volunteer in the setting was identified by 67 % of the family members as a solicited item, with only 15% of the family members identifying that their availability to volunteer was not asked for, and 19% of the families reported that they were unsure if they were asked to identify if their availability to volunteer in the setting. Only 44% of the family members reported that their talents were encouraged as a family involvement resource, 24% identified that the setting did not ask them to identify their talents and 32% of the family members were unsure if their talents were requested as a resource for family involvement. Family involvement practices encouraged by the early childhood setting that support the inclusion of the interests and availability of the family members, as reported by the family members are presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Percentage of family members above 50% reporting family involvement practices in the early childhood settings

Family involvement practices acknowledged by 50% or less of the family members included, donating items related to their family to supplement the curriculum (50%), assisting in the classroom (36%), and facilitating workshops for other members of the setting (27%).

5.1.3 Comparisons between early childhood professionals and family members

The narrative responses from both family members and early childhood professionals indicated newsletters, emails, admissions applications and volunteer sign-

up sheets as how the family involvement practices were elicited for the settings. The majority of early childhood professionals (90%) and family members (69%) indicated that an informal conversation between the families and the professionals was the most common practice for obtaining family participation. It was also recognized by both groups that family involvement practices extend beyond the inclusion of parents. In fact, only 3% of family members and 12% of early childhood professionals identified that they were unsure which family members, including parents, are considered and asked to be involved in the setting. The inclusion of grandparents in the setting was reported by 81% of the early childhood professionals and 39% of the family members. Siblings and other family members were acknowledged less frequently as members that are considered and encouraged to become involved with the setting by both the early childhood professionals (siblings 23% and other family members 19%) and the family members (siblings 27% and other family members 19%).

A majority of family members (64%) and early childhood professionals (81%) acknowledged the existence of family resource areas in the settings; these family resource areas were recognized as a place where information on parenting and other early childhood topics could be obtained. As well, in response to the item related to the recognition of the listing of activities that support the family/professional partnership and have occurred in the early childhood settings within the last year, the indications from the family members and the early childhood professionals was almost identical. In particular, 100% of both groups identified the opportunity for family members and early childhood professionals to plan and contribute jointly in celebration events. The

narrative examples of celebration events were listed by the participant groups as “pot luck dinners”, “welcome back barbeques”, and “breakfast with Santa”. Similarly, a high percentage of the family members and the early childhood professionals acknowledged the chance to jointly plan and participate in activities related to open houses (family members 82%, early childhood professionals 100%), family workshops (family members 82%, early childhood professionals 77%) , and the sharing of family related pictures, songs and stories (family members 85%, early childhood professionals 97%). Neither the family members, nor the early childhood educators acknowledged the existence of home visiting as a family involvement practice used by their respective settings.

5.2 Terminology and Language of Communication and Written Documents Evident within the Setting

5.2.1 Early childhood professionals

The responses to the questionnaire showed that 58% of the early childhood professionals reported that both “parents” and “family members” were referred to when identifying the terminology used for policies and procedures. Twenty-six percent of the early childhood professionals reported that the terminology used for these documents refers to “parents”, while 5% reported that the wording used is “family members”, with 11% of the early childhood professionals unsure of what terms were used in the policies and procedures.

As well, the majority of the early childhood professionals (65%) recognized that these documents were only available in English, with only 29% unsure of whether or not these documents were available in languages other than English. While only 7% of the early childhood professionals were unsure of whether or not the setting signs were printed in languages other than English, 74% responded that the setting signs were only printed in English. Twenty-four percent of the early childhood professionals were unsure of whether the resources found within the resource area of the setting were available in more than one language, while 64% reported that the resources found in this area were only available in English.

An equal number of early childhood professionals (35%) responded that language translators were available for families in the early childhood setting as the early childhood professionals (35%) who were unsure of this availability. However, 97% of the early childhood professionals indicated that there were multilingual professionals employed by the setting. Of these early childhood professionals 62% indicated that the languages, other than English, spoken by the early childhood professionals represented the home languages of some of the family members associated with the setting, 24% reported that they were not sure whether the languages spoken by the early childhood professionals represented the languages spoken by the families of the early childhood setting, and 14% reported the languages spoken by the early childhood professionals did not represent the languages spoken by the families of the setting.

5.2.2 Family members

When identifying the terminology used for policies and procedures 42% of the family members reported that both the terms “parents” and “family members” were used, 17% reported that the term “parents” was used for these documents, and 8% reported that the wording used was “family members”. However, 33% of the family members were unsure of what terms were used in the policies and procedures.

Only 24% of the family members reported that the policies and procedures of the early childhood setting were available only in English, with 72% unsure of whether or not these documents were available in any other language except English. Interestingly, 31% of the family members were unsure of whether or not the signs in the setting were printed in languages other than English, and 58% of the family members responded that the signs in the setting were printed only in English. Sixty-five percent of the family members were unsure of whether the resources found within the resource area of the setting were available in more than one language, while 29% reported that the resources found in this area were not available in any other language than English.

Only 7% of the family members responded that language translators were available to them in the early childhood setting, and 70% indicated that they were unsure of the availability of the language translators. Family members (52%) reported that there were professionals employed by the early childhood setting who speak more than one language. Thirty-three percent of the families reported that the languages, other than English, spoken by the early childhood professionals represented the home

languages of some of the family members associated with the setting. However, 65% of the family members reported that they were not sure whether the languages spoken by the early childhood professionals represented the languages spoken by the families of the early childhood setting.

5.2.3 Comparisons between early childhood professionals and family members

Family members and early childhood professionals identified the following languages as the primary languages for families that were not reflected in any of the communications in the early childhood settings: African, Arabic, Cantonese, Chinese, Farsi, French, Indian, Mandarin, Portuguese, and Russian. A majority of both groups, 93% of family members and 66% of early childhood professionals, were either unsure, or did not know that language translators were available to assist the families of the setting. The comparison of the groups' percentage frequency results for document language use, and translation support available to the families are shown in Table 4.

Table 4

Perception of Language Use in Documents and Translation Support

Item	Percentage of early childhood professionals	Percentage of family members
Document Language Use		
English Only	64.5	24.1
Other Languages	6.5	3.4
Not Sure	29.0	72.4
Translator Support Available		
Yes	34.5	6.9
No	31.0	13.8
Not Sure	34.5	79.3

Forty eight percent of the family members were unsure if there were any early childhood professionals who can speak more than one language, while only 3% of the early childhood professionals were unsure. There was no negative response from either group that any the early childhood professionals employed by the setting did not speak more than one language.

5.3 Visual Representation of Cultural Diversity Evident within the Setting

Visual representation of the ethnic and cultural backgrounds of the early childhood professionals and the families within the setting is evident in the pictures depicted on the

setting signs and pictures found in the resources within the setting. Visual representation of cultural diversity is also evident in the inclusion of a diversity of people (i.e. children, early childhood professionals and family members) within the setting, as well as the physical supplements to the curriculum such as play, menu options, and traditional artefacts used in displays or for play experiences.

5.3.2 Early childhood professionals

The early childhood professionals (60%) indicated that the photographs depicted on the signs in the setting were visually representative of the ethnic and cultural backgrounds of the early childhood professionals and families utilizing the early childhood settings. Similarly the early childhood professionals (48%) perceived photographs in the resources found in the family resource area visually represented the ethnic and cultural backgrounds of the early childhood professionals and families in the setting.

5.3.3 Family members

The family members (52%) responded that the signs in the early childhood settings with pictures visually represent the ethnic and cultural backgrounds of the early childhood professionals and the families in the setting. A fewer number of the family members (31%) found the pictures in the resources found in the family resource area to visually represent the ethnic and cultural backgrounds of the early childhood professionals and the families in the setting.

5.3.4 Comparisons of the early childhood professionals and the family members

Results suggest a difference between the family members (32%) and early childhood professionals (3.4%) who indicated that they were unsure of whether or not the ethnic and cultural backgrounds depicted in the setting sign represented the population of the setting. (Please see Table 5 for the comparison of the percentages related to visual representation).

Table 5

Comparison of Culturally and Ethnically Diverse Visual Representation in the Early Childhood Setting

Item	Percentage of early childhood professionals	Percentage of family members
Visual Representation on Setting Signs		
Yes	58.9%	52.0%
No	37.9%	16.0%
Not Sure	3.4%	32.0%
Visual Representation in Family Resource Area		
Yes	47.8%	31.2%
No	26.1%	12.5%
Not Sure	26.1%	56.3%

When the early childhood professionals and family members were asked to indicate whether family members were encouraged to donate items related to their

family to supplement the curriculum 50% of the family members indicated this was a practice used by the setting, whereas 90% of the early childhood professionals indicated that this was a practice.

There was also a difference between the family members' and the early childhood professionals' perceptions of which particular family members are encouraged to be involved in the setting, 81% of the early childhood professionals and 39% of the family members indicated that grandparents were involved in the setting.

5.4 Availability of Culturally Responsive Supports and Resources within the Setting

5.4.1 Early childhood professionals

The data collected on the questionnaire revealed that the early childhood professionals reported the existence of family involvement practices in their respective early childhood settings. A high percentage of early childhood professionals (81%) indicated that family members were encouraged to identify their family traditions and their ethnic backgrounds. Early childhood professionals (97%) reported that family members most often acknowledge their family traditions and ethnic backgrounds through the practice of sharing family pictures, stories and songs from the family's homes. Other culturally responsive family involvement practices reported by the majority of early childhood professionals include encouraging family members to; join the parent advisory committee (90%), donate items related to the family to supplement the curriculum (90%), create books to be included in the setting (80%), share aspects of their family's culture to help children feel secure and valued (77%), suggest topics of

interest for family workshops related to family origin (52%), and assist in the classroom (50%). Less than half of the early childhood professionals indicated that the family members are encouraged to suggest supplements to the curriculum related to their family origin (45%), volunteer outside of the classroom (42%), facilitate workshops for members of the early childhood setting (32%) and help with and suggest field trips related to cultural history of the families in the program (32%).

5.4.2 Family members

The data revealed that the family members recognized the existence of family involvement practices in their respective early childhood settings. Results indicate that 68% of family members reported that they are encouraged to identify their family traditions and 63% reported that they were asked to identify their ethnic background. The family members reported that they most often acknowledge their family traditions and ethnic backgrounds through the practice of sharing family pictures, stories and songs from the family's homes (89%) with the early childhood setting. Other culturally responsive family involvement practices acknowledged by the family members as occurring in the setting included; sharing aspects of their family's culture to help children feel secure and valued (64.3%), joining the parent advisory committee (61%), creating books to be included in the setting (55.6%), volunteering outside the classroom (52%), donating items related to their family to supplement the curriculum (50%). Less than half of the family members indicated that they are asked to are assist in classroom (36%), suggest topics of interest for family workshops related to family origin (30%),

suggest supplements to the curriculum related to their family origin (29%), facilitate workshops for members of the early childhood setting (27%) or help with or suggest field trips related to cultural histories of the families in the program (12%).

5.4.3 Comparisons between early childhood professionals and family members

Informal conversations were reported as a common practice for obtaining information about the families' ethnic backgrounds and traditions by 69% of family members and 90% of early childhood professionals. Written questionnaires were identified by 43% of the early childhood professionals and 35% of the family members as a practice to obtain information about the families' traditions and ethnic backgrounds.

5.5 Barriers to Family Involvement

5.5.1 Early childhood professionals

A majority of early childhood professionals (67%) identified a lack of staff training related to working with families as a barrier to family involvement practices. It is worthy to note that while 48% of the early childhood professionals reported that family members lack the time to be involved in the early childhood setting, 40% of the early childhood professionals also identified their own lack of time to engage in family involvement practices as a barrier. As well, 40% of the early childhood professionals reported the families' lack of understanding of the profession of early childhood education in Ontario as a barrier to family involvement practices.

Family member's attitudes were reported as a barrier to family involvement practices by 10% of the early childhood professionals. Comments such as: "family

members not valuing the role of the early childhood professional”, and “what we do isn’t seen as important by the families”, and” they think we are just here to babysit”, were reported by the early childhood professionals.

5.5.2 Family members

A lack of time as a barrier to their family involvement was reported by 64% of the family members. With the exception of lack of time the percentage of family members reporting other forms of barriers to family involvement practices was low: early childhood professionals lack time to engage in family involvement practices (15%), parents/families attitudes about the setting (12%), early childhood professionals attitudes about the parents/families (4%), lack of staff training in working with diverse families (8%), and a lack of parent/family member understanding of early childhood education settings in Ontario (8%).

Family members reported that parents’/families’ attitudes about the setting are a barrier to family involvement practices. Comments such as: “it is about the children, not the families, family members lack time to become involved” and “the family member doesn’t know how to become involved because they don’t understand the profession of early childhood education in Ontario” Additionally, family members also reported that early childhood professionals’ attitudes such as: “setting the expectations too high”, “family members do not feel important in the setting”, “not treating the families and the children individually which causes families to feel unimportant” and “early childhood professionals fail to recognize the family as having the best understanding of the

individual development of their child, [citing that] the early childhood professionals think that they know more about the children than the families know” are barriers to family involvement practices.

5.4.3 Comparisons of early childhood professionals and family members

Few of the early childhood professionals (10%) and the family members (12%) reported attitudes of the family members as being a barrier to family involvement practices. Similarly few of the early childhood professionals (3%) and the family members (4%) reported for the attitudes of the early childhood professionals as being a barrier to family involvement practices. Both groups cited complacent attitudes as a barrier to involving families in the setting. Comments such as “it is just not seen as important”, families don’t value this as anything other than babysitting”, “there is no need to be involved”, “there isn’t enough time in the day” and “they don’t need me, they know what they are doing” were cited by either the families or the early childhood professionals.

The data revealed a difference of more than 20% in the perceptions of the participant groups in relation to five of the barriers to family involvement practices including; lack of time on the part of the parent/family, lack of staff training working with parents/families, lack of time on the part of the early childhood professional, lack of parent/family understanding of early childhood education in Ontario, and language differences between staff and parents/families. Table 6 summarizes a comparison of the groups’ responses.

Table 6

Comparison of Participants' Perception of Barriers to Family Involvement in the Early Childhood Setting

Item	Percentage of Participants responding yes		Percentage of Participants responding no		Percentage of Participants responding unsure	
	ECP*	FM**	ECP*	FM**	ECP*	FM**
Barrier to Family Involvement						
Lack of time on the part of the parent/family	48	64	--	29	19	7
Lack of time on the part of the early childhood professional	40	15	50	48	10	37
Lack of staff training in working with parents/families	67	4	13	68	20	28
Lack of parent/family understanding of early childhood settings in Ontario	40	8	20	62	40	31
Parents/families attitudes about the setting	10	12	52	65	38	23
Early childhood professionals attitudes about the parents/families	3	4	62	69	35	27
Culturally or Linguistically Related Barriers to Family Involvement						
Lack of staff training in working with diverse families	13	8	63	56	23	36
Cultural differences between staff and parents/families	17	4	63	64	20	32
Language differences between staff and parents/families	30	--	60	62	10	39

*ECP=early childhood professional   **FM =family member

5.6. Research Questions

The first research question asked what practices are used in the early childhood setting to foster family involvement within the High/Scope curriculum model. Overall the findings from the data indicate that both family members and early childhood professionals reported practices that foster family involvement as evident in their High/Scope settings. Examples of family involvement practices cited by both groups include practices such as: holding open houses, celebration events, workshops, and the sharing of pictures and songs related to the family.

The second research question asked how culturally responsive family involvement is encouraged within the High/Scope curriculum model? Culturally responsive family involvement practices were evident in the High/Scope settings and acknowledged by both groups. Examples of culturally responsive family involvement practices cited by both groups include practices such as: including the term “parents” and “family members” in the documents used by the setting, the inclusion of photographs that visual represent the diversity of families and early childhood professionals in the signs and resources in the setting, and encouraging family members to identify their family traditions and ethnic backgrounds to supplement the curriculum and play materials in the setting.

The third research question asked whether the perceptions of early childhood professionals and family members differ when identifying the culturally responsive family involvement practices. The perceptions of the family members and the early childhood professionals differed when identifying culturally responsive family involvement practices, most specifically when reporting the types of family involvement practices encouraged within the setting, which family members are encouraged to be

involved in the early childhood setting and language differences as a barrier to family involvement practices.

6. Discussion

The primary purpose for this study was to explore the perceptions of family members and early childhood professionals as they report on the practices associated with eliciting and fostering culturally responsive family involvement in the High/Scope approach to Early Childhood Education, and to see if there was a difference in those perceptions. This study focused on the research questions: 1) What practices are used to foster family involvement within the curriculum?, 2) How is culturally responsive family involvement encouraged within the High/Scope curriculum model?, and 3) Do the perceptions of early childhood professionals and family members differ when identifying the culturally responsive family involvement practices? These research questions guided the underlying themes of the questionnaire used to organize the results of this study. The underlying themes of the questionnaire were: 1) family involvement practices encouraged within the program, 2) terminology and language of communication and written documents evident within the setting, 3) visual representation of cultural diversity evident within the setting, 4) availability of culturally responsive support and resources within the setting, and 5) barriers to family involvement. The results are intended to inform both early childhood professionals and family members of how family involvement is perceived, and it is conceivable that the information could enhance the culturally responsive practices utilized in High/Scope and other early childhood programs.

6.1 Family Involvement Practices Encouraged within the Program

The finding that family members and early childhood professionals acknowledged the existence of a parent/family involvement policy was interesting, considering that a document analysis discovered that the policy does not exist, although, all of the programs do have written statements, available on their websites, regarding parent involvement in accordance with the Ontario Day Nurseries Act, O Regulation 262, Section 52 (2) (Government of Ontario, 1990). The misinformed perception could be a result of interpretation of what is meant by a policy. It is possible that the participants view the written statement on parent involvement as a policy, when in actuality this is not the case.

Although a policy does not exist in the settings used for this study, this is not to say that there should not be a policy. Moore and Lasky (2001) and the Ontario Early Years Network (2004) suggested incorporating family support and involvement into the organizational governance of early childhood settings. This would be a visionary approach to strengthening culturally responsive family involvement practices and would help eliminate the deficit model that is currently dominant with many family involvement strategies (Golan & Peterson, 2002; Shimoni & Baxter, 2005). This inclusive infrastructure must permeate the early childhood settings allowing all professionals, children and their families to engage in a shared dialogue related to beliefs that promote diversity as well as equity (Government of Ontario, 2006).

An important finding of this research is the apparent lack of the practice of home visiting in these accredited High/Scope programs. The vital importance placed on home visits as a significant component of partnering with families in the High/Scope

curriculum was not evident in the programs involved in this study. Hohmann, Weikart, and Epstein (2008) discuss the home visit as a fundamental component to establishing and sustaining relationships with the family; the home visits has the intent of learning about the values, strengths, and the contextual life of the child and family. The High/Scope curriculum views the home visit as integral in fostering a culturally responsive, inclusive program, and speaks directly to the developmental niche proposed by Super and Harkness (please see Super & Harkness, 2002). The differences that might exist between the contextual environment of the family's home and the early childhood setting would need to be observed by the early childhood professionals and/or family members, and every effort would need to be made to optimize the child's development and learning by providing stability within, and across the bi-directional influences of the microsystem (please see Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The development of pedagogy for early childhood education is most responsive when it positions culture at the nucleus of its interactions (Edwards, 2004) and recommendations put forth by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (1996; 2009) include early childhood professionals visiting the homes of families with the intention of effectively bringing each child's home culture and language into the shared culture of the learning community. The home visit provides the early childhood professionals with an opportunity to witness the unique contributions of the family's home culture and language to the identity of the child and it would allow these contributions to be acknowledged and appreciated by the other members of the early childhood setting. The child's connection to their family and home would be supported by the inclusion of these vital components of the child's daily home

life into their life in the early childhood setting. By omitting the home visit from the family involvement practices employed by the early childhood settings, the early childhood professionals will need to purposefully seek other alternatives that would equally enlighten the learning community to the contextual life of the child.

The difference recognized between the percentage (39%) of the family members' who acknowledged the inclusion of grandparent involvement in the early childhood setting compared to the early childhood professionals (81%) who recognized this inclusion speaks directly to the debate in the research on which particular family members are included in the practices of family involvement (Jeynes, 2003). The research suggests that early childhood professionals are oblivious to the exclusionary practices experienced by collectivist cultures who share the child-rearing practices amongst their family members if they focus their family involvement practices on the parents of the child only (Henderson & Berla, 1994; Eptsein et. al. 2002; Christian, 2006). However, the high percentage of early childhood professionals indicating that grandparents were encouraged to be involved in the program, may dispute the claim that these early childhood settings function from an individualist culture viewpoint. As well, this item did not ask which family members were not encouraged to be involved with the setting, but merely asked what family members, with the exception of parents, were encouraged to be involved with the setting. For this reason, it is conceivable that the family members who do not spend as much time in the setting on a daily basis as the early childhood professionals would simply be unaware of the involved family members' specific relationship to the child in the setting.

Encouraging and including extended family members, in addition to parents, as a practice of family involvement allows for the interrelationship between the structures in the microsystem referred to in the mesosystem and the macrosystem layer of Bronfenbrenner's ecological model (please see Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1986). Early childhood professionals and early childhood settings that value extended members of a child's family as important influences in the child's life honour the importance of the culturally regulated customs of child care and childrearing practices, and the psychology of the caretaker components of the developmental niche developed by Super and Harkness (2002). Grandparents' involvement in the child's early childhood setting would be considered natural for many of the children identifying with collectivist cultures and the early childhood professionals openness and acceptance of grandparents' inclusion into the early childhood setting influences the child's sense of self.

6.2 Terminology and Language of Communication and Written Documents Evident within the Setting

It is interesting to note that 58% early childhood professionals and 42% family members who identified the existence of the family involvement policy recognized that the terminology used in what they presumed was a policy referred to both "parents" and "family members". This identification of the terminology by the participants is, in itself, recognition of the inclusive practices put forth by the early childhood settings participating in this study. Families who share childrearing practices amongst their family members will feel included and valued in the early childhood setting.

Terminology addressing issues related to the term “parents” as opposed to “family members” presupposes an exclusionary attitude to family involvement beyond the parents.

Similarly communication, both verbal and written, could be viewed as exclusionary if the primary languages of the family members are not acknowledged. A high proportion of the family members (74%) were unaware if language options were available for the formal written communications (e.g. newsletters, letters referring to changes in staffing, policies, and changes in procedures). A high percentage of family members (93%) and a majority of the early childhood professionals (66%) were also unaware of the availability of language translators, or did not believe that of language translators were available, to the families and early childhood professionals of the programs. A possible explanation for this lack of knowledge is that the family members did not require the program documents to be written in another language. However, ten languages, other than English, were identified as spoken by family members of the early childhood settings; providing options for these forms of communication would strengthen the partnership formed between the family and early childhood setting. By respecting, preserving and valuing the home-language development of families, all members of an early childhood setting will learn of the strength this practice can provide to individual children (NAEYC, 1996).

Although the participants of this study were unaware of the availability of language translation services, there are at least two community services to the early childhood sector that provide a variety of language translation services and documents in a variety

of languages (CDRCP, n.d.; Region of Peel, 2008) including: Arabic, Chinese, Farsi, French, Hindi, Mandarin, Polish, Punjabi, Spanish, Tagalog, Tamil, Urdu, and Vietnamese. Many of these languages were identified as languages spoken by the family members. These services would be available to the two early childhood settings participating in this study because they reside in the region. If the need arises, the early childhood professionals could take advantage of these services and show acknowledgement and respect for a family's home language and culture, thus assisting with the development of the child's sense of identity, and a sense of belonging for the child (Bernhard, et. al, 1995; NAEYC, 1996; Souto-Manning, & Swick, 2006). The early childhood professionals' lack of awareness of the availability of translation services can create a roadblock in the social pedagogy put forth by Bronfenbrenner (please see Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1986) and Super and Harkness (please see Super & Harkness, 2002) as the child's identity within his/her familial context is not honoured in the early childhood setting.

6.3 Visual Representation of Cultural Diversity Evident within the Setting

Family members and early childhood professionals were relatively similar in their indication of positive and negative responses to whether or not the visual representations of cultural diversity were apparent in program signs and resources found in the family resource areas of the early childhood settings. There was, however, a gap in the unsure responses of the participant groups. While few of the early childhood professionals were unsure when asked if the settings program signs and the resources found within the

family resource areas depicted diverse cultures more of the family members indicated their uncertainty. This difference could be connected to the amount of time the respective participant groups spend in the environment. Early childhood professionals would typically spend more time per day in the environment than the majority of the children's family members, and therefore are more familiar with the surroundings. Participants' uncertainty about the resources found within the family resource area could be directly connected to whether or not the participants had utilized the resources in these locations. The family members may be aware that the family resource area exists, but may not have used the resources and would therefore be unfamiliar with whether or not the items found within these areas were visually representative of diverse cultures. Further investigation is warranted to determine if the families and early childhood professionals who indicated their uncertainty had ever used the resources found in the family resource areas. The physical setting of a child's world is referred to in the first component of the developmental niche (please see Super & Harkness, 2002). If a child and family do not see visual representations similar to themselves in the physical surroundings of the setting, a sense of not belonging may impede their desire to become involved in the setting. It is plausible that more family members were uncertain whether there were culturally diverse visual representations found within the setting because the family members never felt comfortable enough to become involved and explore the resources in the setting.

6.4 Availability of Culturally Responsive Support and Resources within the Setting

How the culturally responsive support and resources available within the early childhood settings was perceived by the participant groups is noteworthy. More than half of the early childhood professionals indicated seven different culturally responsive family involvement practices that occur within the early childhood setting. More than half of the family members indicated six different culturally responsive family involvement practices that occur within the early childhood setting, but of the seven practices indicated by more than half of the early childhood professionals, only five of the same practices were recognized by more than half of the family members. The culturally responsive family involvement practices that the early childhood professionals identified, that were not identified by the more than half of the family members were; suggesting topics of interest for family workshops related to family origins, and assisting in the classroom. The family members identified volunteering outside the classroom as a culturally responsive family involvement practice that occurs within the setting and the early childhood professionals did not.

Differences may be related to the personal experience of the participants of this study. If the family members who participated in the study had personally partaken in the culturally involvement practice identified on the study, they would be more apt to indicate the inclusion of the practice. If the family member had not personally partaken in the practice, they may not be aware of the existence of the culturally responsive family involvement practice. The early childhood professionals would once again have the advantage of knowing the practice exists because they spend more time in the setting than

the family member. The early childhood professionals would witness the practice within the setting whether they were to personally partake in the event themselves, or merely observe their colleagues engaging family members' involvement. The advantage of more time spent in the centre would not necessarily be as apparent for the early childhood professionals for the practice of family members volunteering outside of the classroom (e.g. family members participating in: the Program Advisory Committee (PAC), fundraising in the community, and recruiting new families to the setting from their personal networks).

The attitudes, values and customs of the culture, or subculture in which a child lives is an defining component of the macrosystem (please see Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1986) and the psychology of the caretaker (please see Super & Harkness, 2002). If family members and early childhood professionals do not place the same value on the family involvement practices implemented in the setting the bi-directional influences in the child's contextual lives would not be stable, thus impacting the child's optimal development and learning.

6.5 Barriers to Family Involvement

Specific narrative responses described the family members' lack of knowledge with how they could be involved in the program, "family members do not feel important in the setting", or their lack of concern with being involved, "it is about the children, not the families, family members lack time to become involved". These accounts may be indicative of the meaningless roles often given to family members when they volunteer in

the program (e.g. family members are often relegated to custodial roles such as: setting and clearing tables for meals, or activities, cleaning toys and sweeping the floors, and supervising washroom routines). These narratives can also be associated with Friere's (1970) "banking concept of education" (p.72). Educators take on the role of the authority figure, relegating the family members to submissive, menial roles. In fact, when the attitudes from early childhood professionals were identified as being a barrier to family involvement practices the attitudes were recorded by family members as causing the families to feel unimportant and failing to recognize the family's knowledge about their child as important. The complacent attitude of both participant groups regarding involving families in the program, described by both the early childhood professionals and the family members, is indicative of the lack of equality in the partnership that leads to exclusionary practices for family involvement (Bernhard, et. al, 1995; NAEYC, 1996; Souto-Manning, & Swick, 2006, Epstein, 2007).

Families need to feel comfortable with the process of family involvement as a way to support their children's learning and development. Perhaps the family members' and early childhood professionals' responses indicating "not sure" to any of the items on the questionnaire may suggest some level of discomfort with the family involvement strategies practiced in early childhood setting. As Jeynes (2003) identified family involvement can mean many different things to many different people, it is also reasonable to assume that participants indicating a "not sure" response may be related to the "lack of time" acknowledged by both the early childhood professionals and the family members. Both participant groups indicated a lack of time as a barrier to fostering family

involvement practices. If there is a genuine lack of time to foster family involvement, or even a perceived lack of time, it is possible for this time constraint to impede the knowledge of how family involvement practices are cultivated.

The barrier to inclusive family involvement practices that was most recognized by the early childhood professionals identified their lack of training working with parents/families. The Ontario early learning framework, *Early Learning for Every Child Today* (Government of Ontario, 2006) and *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs* (Bredenkamp & Copple, 2009) recommends that early childhood professionals who wish to promote family involvement practices should first engage in self-reflection about their own preconceived biases that preclude their ability to work in partnership with families. These biases will affect how the early childhood professional will interact with other members of the learning community (NAEYC, 1996; Bernhard, Freire, & Mulligan, 2004). The High/Scope curriculum model recognizes the importance of assisting early childhood professionals in overcoming their own biases when working with families and has identified a framework of reflection for effectively involving diverse families in the program. The first step in this framework, and an important element of this framework, is to recognize and confront personal cultural biases. Creating positive relationships, avoiding the tourist approach, and pursuing the active learning approach in the multicultural classroom are the other elements of the High/Scope framework for multi-cultural programs (Kruse & Neill, 2006).

This recognition to personal biases when working with families is acknowledged in the third component of the developmental niche developed by Super and Harkness

(please see Super & Harkness, 2002), the psychology of the caretaker, and in the macrosystem layer of Bronfenbrenner's ecological model (please see Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1986). The values, beliefs, expectations and styles of interaction of the caretaker, or early childhood professional, influence their immediate behaviours as well as informing their larger decisions. Early childhood professionals who are bias to family members will negatively influence the family involvement practices of the setting.

It is noteworthy that the early childhood professionals and the family members did not perceive cultural issues as barriers to family involvement. A low proportion of both participant groups identified cultural differences as a barrier to family involvement practices. This is in contrast to the research that suggests that there is an increasing amount of evidence to propose that barriers to successful family involvement practices are associated with cultural differences (Golan & Peterson, 2002; Bernhard & Gonzalez-Mena, 2005; Crozier & Davies, 2007). However, there was a difference in the perception of early childhood professionals (30%) who identified differences in language as a barrier to family involvement practices. Not one of the family members indicated language differences as a barrier to family involvement. This difference could possibly be explained if all of the family members who participated in the study spoke the primary language of the early childhood professionals. It is also possible that the early childhood professionals view language differences as a barrier to family involvement practices due to their feelings of being ill-equipped to successfully involve multilingual families in the setting. Early childhood professionals who do not speak or understand the home language the family members associated with the setting may be concerned with

instances of miscommunications that may be occur as a result. As well, the early childhood professionals identified a barrier to family involvement practices as their lack of training working with parents/families in general, by adding language differences to this equation may exacerbate this already tenuous situation. Additional research would need to be conducted to further examine the difference between the responses of the early childhood professionals' and the family members'.

6.6. Limitations of the Study

The sample size was relatively small and focused on only three centres in two adjacent municipalities; therefore the findings cannot be generalized. It was difficult, with the limited time-line for this study, to recruit a larger selection of early childhood settings that identify with, and are accredited in the High/Scope approach to early childhood education.

Additionally, responses given to the questionnaires were self-reports, therefore somewhat limiting to the study, as self-reports are not always reliable (Salkind, 2007; Gay, Hill & Airasian, 2008; Cresswell, 2008). This limitation exists because the participants' self-reports may differ from the actual practice. Direct observation of practices may actually have revealed more in-depth, and accurate data related to culturally responsive family-involvement. However, given that the intent of the study was to examine the existence of early childhood professionals' and family members' perceptions of culturally responsive practices elicited and fostered by the High/Scope

approach to early childhood education, and not the quality of those practices, the self-reports given by the participants are sufficient for this study.

The purpose of this study was in itself a limitation. Since the quality of the culturally responsive family involvement practices was not investigated, the perceived existences of the practices do not indicate if the quality of the practices was developmentally appropriate. Although, the culturally responsive family involvement practice was perceived to exist, this does not ensure that the child will benefit from the practice.

Another notable limitation to the study is the practice of using NAEYC's guidelines for developmentally appropriate practice as the focal point of best practice. NAEYC is an American association and the Canadian context is not aptly served by morphing the Americanized practices upon the distinctly different Canadian culture of early childhood settings. Future research should include the use of the practices and principles put forth by the Canadian early learning frameworks published in Ontario, New Brunswick and British Columbia as a means of exploring the uniqueness of the Canadian culture of early learning and care programs

Another limitation to the study was that the questionnaire was only available in English. It is possible that the only participants literate in English were able to respond to the questionnaire. This limitation could have skewed the results, as more linguistically diverse populations may not have been able to respond. As well, the questionnaire did not ask participants to indicate their primary language, nor did it ask participants to acknowledge their ethnic and cultural backgrounds. It is conceivable that the family

member participant group was not reflective of the ethnic, cultural and linguistic diversity of the population of the early childhood settings involved in the study.

6.7 Implications for Practice and Further Research

The results of this study suggest that both family members and early childhood professionals are, for the most part, aware of the family involvement practices that strive to acknowledge the diverse contextual lives of children. This knowledge, combined with previous studies related to the importance of family involvement in the success of children's lives, and studies that have proposed practices that advocate for culturally responsive practices throughout the curriculum, suggest that culturally responsive family involvement principles in practice will increase the quality of inclusive early childhood education programs, thus supporting optimal development and learning.

The importance of finding limited differences between the family members and early childhood professionals with respect to many of the perceptions of culturally responsive family involvement practices suggests that the strategies evident in the early childhood program are inclusive of both memberships. Early childhood professionals' perceptions that they lack training in working with families has implications for professional preparation programs. The *Early Childhood Education Program Standards* (Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, 2000) applies to all Ministry approved Early Childhood Education Programs and outline the "essential skills and knowledge needed to graduate [from a] program" (p. 1). These programs "prepare graduates to work with children and their families in a diverse...community in both

formal and informal settings and within a changing social context” (p. 4). Skills related to working with families are specifically referred to in two of the nine vocational standards put forth in the *Early Childhood Education Program Standards* (2002). If early childhood professionals are feeling ill-equipped to work with families after graduating from a Ministry approved program, the programs should enhance their programs to help the graduate meet this essential skill.

This finding also has significant implications for the newly formed Ontario College of Early Childhood Educators (CECE), “a professional self-regulatory organization for early childhood educators formed to protect the public interest and focused on quality and standards in the practice of early childhood education” (College of Early Childhood Educators, 2008, About the College, para. 1). Since the CECE is “focused on quality and standards of practice”, (para.1) ensuring the quality of interactions between early childhood educators and family members would be part of the college’s mandate.

The study identified that a number of family members indicated that they were unsure of whether culturally responsive family involvement practices were being utilized within the setting, therefore it might prove prudent for early childhood settings to develop and implement a culturally responsive family involvement policy for their program. As a policy within the setting, early childhood professionals would be required to inform, and include family members in the procedures related to the policy, thus increasing the likelihood for family members to be more familiar with the practices.

This study focused on family members’ and early childhood professionals’ perceptions of culturally responsive family involvement practices, and not the quality of

the practices. To fully understand how family members and early childhood professionals perceive the value of the culturally responsive family involvement practices, further research is needed. It is recommended that further in-depth, observational studies that focus on the quality of the family involvement practices should be undertaken. It is also suggested that longitudinal studies be conducted on the children who are involved in early childhood programs that foster culturally responsive family involvement to investigate the long-term benefits of this relationship in their lives. This type of study is related to the chronosystem of Bronfenbrenner's ecological model. A longitudinal study that focuses on the quality of family involvement practices in early childhood settings, following the children into their adult life could examine the relationship between the quality of the family involvement practices on future adult success.

6.8 Conclusion

The information from this study was intended to inform both early childhood professionals, and family members of how culturally responsive family involvement was perceived in High/Scope early childhood programs. Ultimately, the intent of this study is to augment the culturally responsive family involvement practices utilized in High/Scope, and other early childhood programs. If the family members and early childhood professionals were previously unaware of how the other contextual group perceived culturally responsive family involvement practices, this study could enlighten their perspective. As family members and early childhood professionals begin to understand

the perspectives of the other influential members in the lives of children, the partnership between the family members and the early childhood professionals could be enhanced; thus increasing the quality of the education and care for the children. The goal of culturally responsive family involvement practices should be to better enable children to grow up with a strong sense of self that promotes values of equity and democracy.

Appendix A

Family Involvement Survey

If you would prefer to complete this survey online please access the following website

http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=u2gLvmBD_2fTq5xGWrpacN2g_3d_3d

While you are not required to respond, your cooperation is greatly appreciated, and needed to make the results of this survey comprehensive, accurate and timely. Please complete the following questionnaire as truthfully as possible.

1. What is your position in this early childhood setting? (circle the most relevant to you role in this setting)

Early Childhood Educator	Early Childhood Educator (Equivalent or Director's approval)	Early Childhood Assistant	Other Staff of the program (e.g. after school assistant, cook)	Supervisor/ Manager/ Director	Family Member
1	2	3	4	5	6

2. This program has a written policy on parent/family involvement? (Circle one number)

Yes	No	Not Sure
1	2	3

- b) If you answered yes to question 2, does the policy address the term "parents", or "family members" in the terminology of the policy? (circle one number)

Policy refers to "parents"	Policy refers to "family members"	Both	Not Sure
1	2	3	4

3. Are the policies/procedures and other forms of formal written communication available in more languages other than English? (circle one number)

English only	Other languages	Not Sure
1	2	3

- b) If "other languages" was selected for question 3, in what languages are the documents offered?

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c) Are all of the home languages of the families who participate in the early childhood setting reflected in the documents?

Yes	No	Not Sure
1	2	3

d) If “no” was selected for 3c, what are the home languages used by families in this program that are not reflected in the program documents?

Are language translators available to your program to assist families if needed? (circle one number)

Yes	No	Not Sure
1	2	3

Do any of the Early Childhood professionals employed by this program speak more than one language?

Yes	No	Not Sure
1	2	3

b) If “yes” was selected for question 5, are the languages, other than English, languages that are spoken by families in this program?

Yes	No	Not Sure
1	2	3

Are the program signs printed in different languages other than English? (circle one number)

Yes	No
1	2

b) If “yes” was selected for question 6, in what languages are the program signs offered?

---

c) Do these “other than English” signs reflect the home languages of the families in this program?

Yes	No	Not Sure
1	2	3

d) If “no” was selected for 6c, what are the languages used by families in this program that are not reflected in the program signs?

---

e) Do the program signs with pictures represent the ethnic and cultural backgrounds of the Early Childhood Professionals and the families in this program?

Yes	No	Not Sure
1	2	3

7. Parents/family members are asked to identify their talents, interests, family traditions, ethnic backgrounds and availability to volunteer in the early childhood setting? (circle all numbers that apply)

	Yes	No	Not Sure
a) Talents	1	2	3
b) Interests	1	2	3
c) Family Traditions	1	2	3
d) Ethnic Background	1	2	3
e) Availability	1	2	3

8. If you answered yes to any statements in 7a-e, how are parents/family members asked to identify talents, interests, family traditions, ethnic backgrounds and availability? (circle all numbers that apply)

Written survey	Informal conversation	Not Sure	Other
1	2	3	4

b) If “other” was selected for question 8, please list what other ways parents/family members are asked to volunteer.

Parents/family members are encouraged to share their talents, interests, family traditions, ethnic backgrounds in this program in the following ways. (circle all numbers that apply)

	Activity		
	Yes	No	Not Sure
a. Assisting in the classrooms	1	2	3
b. Helping with, or suggesting, field trips related to the cultural history of the families in the program	1	2	3
c. Joining the parent/family advisory committee	1	2	3
d. Donating items related to their family to supplement the curriculum	1	2	3
e. Sharing aspects of their family's culture that can help children feel secure and valued for who they are	1	2	3
f. Suggesting supplements to the curriculum and daily operations of the setting related to their family origin (menu planning, curriculum planning, and areas of interest for children)	1	2	3

	Activity		
	Yes	No	Not Sure
g. Suggesting topics of interest for parent/family workshops/training related to their family origin.	1	2	3
h. Facilitating workshops for other parents/family members and early childhood professionals of the setting	1	2	3
i. Volunteering outside the classrooms (e.g. fundraising, recruitment nights, sitting on hiring committees)	1	2	3
j. Encouraging children to bring pictures of their families, share favorite stories or songs from home.	1	2	3
k. Creating personal books to be included in the program.	1	2	3

10. What relationship to the child/ren are the members of the families who are involved in the program as suggested in question 9 a-k? (circle all that apply)

Parent(s)	Grandparent(s)	Sibling(s)	Other Family Members (eg. Aunt, Uncle)	Not Sure
1	2	3	4	5

11. There is a parent/family resource area in the setting. (A place to get information on parenting and other information related to early childhood.) (circle one number)

Yes	No	Not Sure
1	2	3

If you answered yes to question 11, please complete the following questions. If you answered “no” or “not sure” to question 11, please move on to question 12.

- b) Are the resources found in this area available in more than one language?

Yes	No	Not Sure
1	2	3

- c) If “yes” was selected for question 11b), are the languages, other than English, reflective of the families in this program?

Yes	No	Not Sure
1	2	3

- d) Are the resources found in this area visually representative of the ethnic and cultural backgrounds of the families in this program?

Yes	No	Not Sure
1	2	3

12. Visits to the homes of the families in this program are conducted? (circle one number)

Yes	No	Not Sure
1	2	3

- b) If you answered yes to question 12, who makes these visits to the families homes? (circle all that apply)

Early Childhood Educator	Early Childhood Educator (Equivalent or Director’s approval)	Early Childhood Program Staff	Supervisor/Manager/Director	Other (please specify) _____
1	2	3	4	5

[illegible][illegible]

12. Are the following concerns barriers to parent/family involvement in the program? (circle all that apply)

a. Lack of time on the part of the parents/family

b. Lack of time on the part of the early childhood professionals

c. Lack of staff training in working with parents/families

d. Lack of staff training in working with diverse families

e. Cultural differences between staff and parents/families

f. Language differences between staff and parents/families

g. Lack of parent/family understanding of early childhood education programs in Ontario

h. Parents/families attitudes about the setting

If you answer "yes", please identify the attitude that is seen as a barrier)

Early Childhood Professionals attitudes about the parents/families

If you answer "yes", please identify the attitude that is seen as a barrier)

Barrier?		
Yes	No	Not Sure
1	2	3
1	2	3
1	2	3
1	2	3
1	2	3
1	2	3
1	2	3
1	2	3
1	2	3

14. Please indicate which kinds of activities have been held at your early childhood setting in the last year and if the activity/event occurred indicate how the parent/families were involved (Circle all numbers that apply).

	Activity			Parent/Family Involvement?	
	Yes	No		Planning	Participating
a. Open House or Welcome Back Night	1	2	If "yes" how were the parent/families involved?	3	4
b. Parent/family -ECE conference	1	2	If "yes" how were the parent/families involved?	3	4
c. Celebration event (e.g. holiday concert, picnic, pot-luck dinner, etc.) Please name and briefly describe the event(s) _____ _____ _____	1	2	If "yes" how were the parent/families involved?	3	4
d. Parent/family workshop	1	2	If "yes" how were the parent/families involved?	3	4
e. Parent/family member read/told stories, shared oral traditions, beliefs and values, and knowledge of traditional celebrations, art, music, poetry and/or dance (Please list what the activity was) _____ _____	1	2	If "yes" how were the parent/families involved?	3	4
f. Parents/family members involved in joint projects with the staff and children (Please list what the activity was) _____ _____	1	2	If "yes" how were the parent/families involved?	3	4
g. Children brought pictures of their families, share favorite stories or songs from home	1	2	If "yes" how were the parent/families involved?	3	4

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION

If you are interested in obtaining a copy of the summary of the completed research, please include your contact information on this form.

Name: _____

Email address: _____

and/or

Mailing address: _____

Appendix B

Cover Letter for Family Member

Dear Family Member,

I would like to introduce myself to you. My name is Cathy Coulthard, and I am a student in the Masters of Art Early Childhood Studies (MAECS) program at Ryerson University where I am completing a major research paper as part of my requirements to graduate.

I am inviting you to participate in a research project that will study how early childhood programs consider cultural background when they encourage family members to be involved in their child's education and care. Along with this letter you are receiving a consent form. If you give your consent to participate, you will be invited to complete a short survey that asks a variety of questions about the family involvement practices of your early childhood setting. I am asking you to look over the survey and, if you choose to do so, complete it and return it to me. In order to ensure your confidentiality I have included an envelope that you can place the survey in and seal before handing it to me, into the office or to the supervisor of your early childhood setting. The survey is also available online if you prefer to complete it electronically. I guarantee that your responses will not be identified with you personally. The Ryerson University Research Ethics Board has approved this study.

The survey should take you about 20 minutes to complete. I hope you will take the time to complete this questionnaire and return it; however, your participation is voluntary. If you consent to participate in this study, please sign the enclosed form and the survey will be distributed to you.

If you have any questions or concerns about completing the questionnaire or about being in this study, you may contact me at ccoultha@ryerson.ca or by calling 905-845-9430 ext. 2674.

Sincerely,

Cathy Coulthard
MAECS student candidate

Consent Letter for Family Member

Early Childhood Education in Relation to Family Involvement and Cultural Responsiveness

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Before you give your consent to be a volunteer, it is important that you read the following information and ask as many questions as necessary to be sure you understand what you will be asked to do.

Investigator:

Cathy Coulthard, Masters of Arts, Early Childhood Studies (MAECS) student candidate.

Purpose of the Study:

The purpose of this study is to identify how early childhood programs consider cultural background when they encourage family members to be involved in their child's education and care.

This study will compare the responses of early childhood professionals and family members as they reply to questions related to family involvement practices in the early learning and care program.

The Role of the Family Member:

Family members are asked to manually, or electronically complete a questionnaire pertaining to the parent/family involvement practices that are used by their early childhood setting. The participant is required to only respond to questions that s/he is comfortable answering. The questionnaire can be completed in the child care setting, the participants place of work, or in the comfort of their own home. One session, approximately 20 minutes in length should be appropriate for documenting the information necessary for the project.

What is Experimental in this Study:

The only part of this study that is experimental is the gathering of information to be analysed.

Risks or Discomforts:

The personal nature of the questions asked, may bring up some unpleasant memories. If you begin to feel uncomfortable, you may choose not to answer those particular questions, or you may choose to stop participating, either temporarily or permanently.

Benefits of the Study:

The study is for educational and scholarly purposes only. The only benefits that you might experience from this study might be the increase in the quality of interactions between your children and the early childhood professionals of this setting.

Confidentiality:

Confidentiality of the participant will be protected in all parts of the research and dissemination. No one will know your participation other than the graduate student, and this is only if you choose to include your contact information so that a summary of the results can be made available to you. All completed questionnaires will be stored in a locked container that only the graduate student has access to. The completed questionnaires will be destroyed after the study has been completed, the research paper has been written, and one calendar year has passed from the date of submitting the research paper for grading.

Incentives to Participate

You will not be paid to participate in this study. A copy of a summary of the report will be made available to you if you have indicated a desire to see the finished research paper.

Voluntary Nature of Participation:

Participation in this study is your choice. Your choice of whether or not to participate will not influence your future relations with Ryerson University or your position in this early childhood setting. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and to stop your participation at any time without any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are allowed.

At any particular point in the study, you may refuse to answer any particular question or stop participation altogether.

Questions about the Study: If you have any questions about the research you may contact.

MAECS student candidate

Cathy Coulthard

ccoultha@ryerson.ca

905-845-9430 ext. 2674

Supervising Professor

Aurelia Di Santo Ph.D.

disanto@ryerson.ca

416-979-5000 ext. 4576

If you have questions regarding your rights as a human subject and participant in this study, you may contact the Ryerson University Research Ethics Board for information.

Research Ethics Board

c/o Office of the Vice President, Research and Innovation

Ryerson University

350 Victoria Street

Toronto, ON M5B 2K3

416-979-5042

Agreement:

Your signature below indicates that you have read the information in this agreement and have had a chance to ask any questions you have about the study. Your signature also indicates that you agree to be in the study and have been told that you can change your mind and withdraw your consent to participate at any time. You have been given a copy of this agreement.

You have been told that by signing this consent agreement you are not giving up any of your legal rights.

_____
Name of Participant (please print)

_____
Signature of Participant

_____
Date

Cover letter for EC Professionals

Dear Early Childhood Professional,

I would like to introduce myself to you. My name is Cathy Coulthard, and I am a student in the Masters of Art Early Childhood Studies (MAECS) program at Ryerson University where I am completing a major research paper as part of my requirements to graduate.

I am inviting you to participate in a research project that will examine how an early childhood curricula model elicits and fosters culturally responsive family involvement. Along with this letter you are receiving a consent form. If you give your consent to participate, you will be invited to complete a short survey that asks a variety of questions about the family involvement practices of your early childhood setting. I am asking you to look over the survey and, if you choose to do so, complete it and return it to me. In order to ensure your confidentiality I have included an envelope that you can place the survey in and seal before handing it to me, into the office or to the supervisor of your early childhood setting. The survey is also available online if you prefer to complete it electronically. I guarantee that your responses will not be identified with you personally. The Ryerson University Research Ethics Board has approved this study.

The survey should take you about 20 minutes to complete. I hope you will take the time to complete this questionnaire and return it; however, your participation is voluntary. If you consent to participate in this study, please sign the enclosed form and the survey will be distributed to you.

If you have any questions or concerns about completing the questionnaire or about being in this study, you may contact me at ccoultha@ryerson.ca or by calling 905-845-9430 ext. 2674.

Sincerely,

Cathy Coulthard
MAECS student candidate

Consent Letter for EC Professionals

Early Childhood Education in Relation to Family Involvement and Cultural Responsiveness

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Before you give your consent to be a volunteer, it is important that you read the following information and ask as many questions as necessary to be sure you understand what you will be asked to do.

Investigator:

Cathy Coulthard, Masters of Arts, Early Childhood Studies (MAECS) student candidate.

Purpose of the Study:

The purpose of this study is to identify how an early childhood model of curricula elicits and fosters culturally responsive family involvement.

This study will compare the responses of early childhood professionals and family members as they reply to questions related to family involvement practices in the early learning and care program.

The Role of the early childhood professional:

Early childhood professionals are asked to manually, or electronically complete a questionnaire pertaining to the parent/family involvement practices that are used by their early childhood setting. The participant is required to only respond to questions that s/he is comfortable answering. The questionnaire can be completed in the child care setting, the participants place of work, or in the comfort of their own home. One session, approximately 20 minutes in length should be appropriate for documenting the information necessary for the project.

What is Experimental in this Study:

None of the procedures used in this study is experimental in nature. The only experimental aspect of this study is the gathering of information for the purpose of analysis.

Risks or Discomforts:

Minimal risks are associated with questionnaire, however, the personal nature of the questions asked, may elicit unpleasant memories. If the participant begins to feel uncomfortable, he/she may choose not to answer those particular questions, or he/she may choose to discontinue participation, either temporarily or permanently.

Benefits of the Study:

The study is for educational and scholarly purposes only. There are no benefits that the participants can reasonably expect from this study other than reflecting on personal practices thus optimising opportunities to increase quality of interactions with children and early childhood professionals.

Confidentiality:

Confidentiality of the participant will be protected in all parts of the research and dissemination. No one will know of participation or non participation other than the graduate student, and this is only if the participant chooses to include his/her contact information so that a summary of the results can be made available to them. All completed questionnaires will be stored in a locked container that only the graduate student has access to. The completed questionnaires will be eliminated after the

study has been completed, the research paper has been written, and one calendar year has passed from the date of submitting the research paper for grading.

Incentives to Participate

The participants will not be paid to participate in this study. The only form of compensation will be a copy of a summary of the report will be made available to those participants who have indicated a desire to see the finished research paper.

Voluntary Nature of Participation:

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your choice of whether or not to participate will not influence your future relations with Ryerson University or your place of employment. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and to stop your participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are allowed.

At any particular point in the study, you may refuse to answer any particular question or stop participation altogether.

Questions about the Study: If you have any questions about the research you may contact.

MAECS student candidate

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If you have questions regarding your rights as a human subject and participant in this study, you may contact the Ryerson University Research Ethics Board for information.

Research Ethics Board

c/o Office of the Vice President, Research and Innovation

Ryerson University

350 Victoria Street

Toronto, ON M5B 2K3

416-979-5042

Agreement:

Your signature below indicates that you have read the information in this agreement and have had a chance to ask any questions you have about the study. Your signature also indicates that you agree to be in the study and have been told that you can change your mind and withdraw your consent to participate at any time. You have been given a copy of this agreement.

You have been told that by signing this consent agreement you are not giving up any of your legal rights.

_____
Name of Participant (please print)

_____
Signature of Participant

_____
Date

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